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MADAM DORRINGTON

OF THE DENE:

THE STORY OF A LIFE.

BY

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"THE HALL AND THE HAMLET,"

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MADAM DORRINGTON,

OF

THE DENE.

CHAPTER I.

We now concentrate our narrative of the life of Mrs. Dorrington particularly on her youngest son. Poor Delmey has run his short and unfortunate career. His children, under the tender care of his mother, are placed near her in the pleasant cottage where Mr. Bathurst visited them, and have a respectable young woman as governess living with them. Bulkeley lives a stately, and to all appearance, a religious life. His mother, some way, however, does not visit him much, nor does he frequently visit the Dene; but his father makes his regular journeys to Bulkeley's, and is much made of there, and greatly admires the sense of substantial prosperity which prevails, and so palpably

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hovers about Bulkeley's noble house and estate; the pious spirit and pious order of Mrs. Bulkeley Dorrington's establishment, and the esteem in which the family of his son is held by the great families all round. Bulkeley, with much style, yet lives within his income; never was there a man of more careful business habits; or a woman than his wife of more prudent mind. There are handsome children in the nursery, and a substantial deposit in the bank. The Bulkeley Dorringtons are held in great honour, and they hold their father in great honour. He enjoys immensely his stated and punctual visits there; the world goes well with all in that quarter. If Delmey had been as discreet as Bulkeley, he might have now been living, and in equal prosperity. If Vincent would but follow Bulkeley's example, what a comfort it would be.

Ha! Vincent!—Vincent up to the time of Delmey's marriage, as we have already made known, had led an easy life, full of youthful gaiety and enjoyment. Capable of *anything*, as the Vicar declared, if he had but application, but extremely attached to Delmey, and roaming with him with his gun through wood and field, and tracking the windings of the Wilder after the trout. He was, as we have said, destined to

the bar, and did not object to it. But his father wished him, prior to commencing his more general studies, to pass a few years in the office, as calculated to give him a practical knowledge of practical law, which would greatly aid him when pursuing his way through Coke and Blackstone. To this Vincent did object, professing that he thought it much better to ground himself in all the knowledge of classics, mathematics, and modern languages, which would give breadth to his conceptions, weight in the most intelligent society, and that finish to his style and resources in pleading, which could alone entitle him to aim at the highest walks of his profession; and at that highest he declared he was resolved to aim.

This youthful manifestation of ambition greatly delighted his father, and he no longer insisted on the office probation. But up to the time of Delmey's marriage, the Vicar could not conscientiously say that Vincent improved in that desideratum which he was for ever dinning into his ears—application. Vincent, with a handsome person, a most intelligent look, and abilities for anything, to use Jeremiah Gould's expression, was very fond of fun. He loved his mother dearly, and never was more happy than when attending her in the garden amongst her

flowers, walking with her down the fields, or even reading to her in the Nest from her favourite authors, whom he greatly enjoyed; but he was equally fond of a frolic amongst his youthful cotemporaries. He was often found by Jeremiah at the Greatorexes, laughing and joking with the farmer's daughters, who were now growing up, very blooming and merry girls. Vincent was a favourite guest at their tea-parties in the summer-house in the large old garden, where there was a deal of play and romping going on amongst the young people, while the old farmer sate and smoked his pipe, and laughed heartily at the pranks of the young; saying often to Jeremiah Gould, who would be smoking gravely by his side:

"It does me good, Vicar, to see these young ones enjoy theirsens. Time flies; and they'll soon have enough, mayhap, to sober 'em. Drat it! Vicar, it brings back the days when I was a young youth mysen, light as a willow wand, —and you would not think it now—when I've cut corn all day, and carted it all night, of a fine, clear, moonlight night. Lord! what nights those wor! And then, instead of going to bed, have gone off, a whole set of us—the harvest being done—and plunged into th' great wood

a-nutting, all among the green boughs, with the sun shining through them, and th' air as fresh as fresh. Oh laws, Vicar; what times those wor! How th' blood used to run through one's veins, and dance through one's heart, like fire without smoke. Ah! those *were* days! And here we are, Vicar—at least I am—owld and fat, and th' fire gone out and nought but smoke left. I dunna mean th' tobacco smoke. Ay, let 'em play 'em while they can. Mr. Vincent, he'll soon be gone. He'll be a great man one day, much too great to romp wi' old Greatorex's lasses; though, maybe, he'll not be much happier than he is now. But then, he mun mount up, Vicar—he mun mount up—I am sure of that; he's not born to waste his life *ignómminously* 'i th' country like us."

Vincent went with the Greatorexes, the sons and daughters, at Christmas time, amongst their farmer friends, and wonderfully enjoyed all the old-fashioned sports of that time; and was a wonderful favourite in all those parties for his handsome person and his exuberant fun and good-nature. One night, about two o'clock, the Vicar, who was returning, wrapped in his large German cloak, from praying by the death-bed of an old villager, was astonished to see

Vincent carrying a ladder from the stable-yard towards the Dene.

"What *can* be the matter, my dear Vincent?" said the Vicar, in vast astonishment.

"Nothing at all, Sir," answered Vincent; "only I have been having a game at turn-trencher with the Greatorexes at Farmer Flamborough's of Okerthorpe, and I am going to get in at my chamber-window, for they don't expect me to-night: they think I shall stay at the Greatorex's, and they will be so amazed to see me walk down in the morning to breakfast."

"Ah! Vincent, Vincent, my dear lad!" said the Vicar, who was in a particularly serious mood, just coming from a scene in strongest contrast to this overflowing life; "I do want to see you getting more sedate, and climbing a very different ladder—the ladder of distinction."

"All in good time, Mr. Gould," said the merry youth; "but this ladder, I can tell you, is a plaguy weight; do just come and help me to raise it."

The worthy man obeyed with perfect good-humour; and Vincent nodded a good-night to him from his chamber window, when he had entered it, saying, in a strong whisper: "It

would be asking quite too much of you to carry the ladder away for me?"

Jeremiah Gould could not help laughing, in the midst of his solemnity, and went away, resolving to give his beloved pupil a most severe lecture on his levity the next day.

But the thing which cured Vincent of his lightness was Delmey's unhappy marriage. From that day he seemed to have taken up a new resolve. Whether he thought it was time to give his parents some evidence of a solid mind in him, or that he had lost his companion in the fields in Delmey, who was now generally at home with his wife, or busy with Hardy in the farm, from that time Vincent was a steady daily attendant at the Parsonage. The Vicar was delighted; and after plodding through Homer and Virgil, through Plato and Euclid, or spending long hours over French, German, and Italian, which Jeremiah wished to make Vincent thoroughly master of, as the keys of all the knowledge of the continent, they would take long walks together, in which Jeremiah strictly confined their discourse to one of those three languages. He recommended Vincent to travel for two or three years, saying he did not doubt but he could place the advantages of this

so strongly before his father, that he would consent to it. The Vicar recounted with enthusiasm the heavenly days he had passed abroad, and the dear young souls, as he called them, that he had met. He enumerated the acquisitions of music, philosophy, and knowledge of men and things that were to him daily sources of the purest enjoyment. But beyond these, he expressed his wonder that Englishmen—and it was too true of his time, now happily amended in ours—showed so little desire to acquaint themselves intimately with the people of other countries. Whether we regarded the right administration of our public affairs in reference to foreign objects, or the maintenance of a proper sympathy with our foreign neighbours, he deemed it as alike desirable that we should acquaint ourselves with the actual statistics of the countries with which our high position amongst the nations, and our vast commercial connection with them, made so clearly our concern. He believed that if we did this more, we should be less and less disposed to quarrel with other countries; that such quarrels often arose out of a total ignorance of each other and of our mutual interests.

Desiring, therefore, that Vincent should

furnish himself with all possible material for professional eminence, he strongly recommended this actual knowledge of all European nations. It might seem to most a strange and out-of-the-way portion of a legal education; but it did not seem so to him. How many occasions there were, he observed, when a barrister was called on in this country to plead the rights of foreigners, especially of merchants, and what *éclat* must follow the display of a profound knowledge in such cases. How often a successful barrister was called on to represent a constituency in Parliament: what an immense advantage was such a knowledge then! It might lead, and was likely to lead, to employment by the State. It opened the way, indeed, to the highest and most honourable offices in the kingdom, and to the opportunity of conferring on the country and the world the most extensive and real blessings, through a thorough knowledge of those things.

Jeremiah Gould did not believe any such high and ample field of action beyond the grasp of Vincent, if he had application, cultivated his powers by the most liberal use of study and observation, and had an adequate ambition—an ambition not so much based on selfish views, stimulated by vain-glory, but growing naturally

and vigorously from a deep love, like that of Vincent's revered mother, to mankind.

The discourse of the simple, but wide-minded Vicar, though at first appearing too grand in its scope for him, in the end had, at least, this effect on Vincent, that he conceived a great passion for travel, and laboured hard to prepare himself for it. Mr. Dorrington, when it was first proposed to him, rejected it as altogether visionary, and a waste of time. He contended that our very highest lawyers and statesmen had risen to the most splendid eminence without all this; and that a close and severe application to a complete mastery of the great scheme, and all its branching principles of English jurisprudence, was the one thing essential. But this did not shake Jeremiah Gould's views. He was for combining both, and producing yet finer lawyers and statesmen than the world had seen. He saw a new baptism of worldly policy with the spirit of Christianity, yet capable of producing better fruits to the world at large than it had hitherto enjoyed. He believed in yet as great discoveries in jurisprudence and in state policy, as in physical science, which should bind nations together, as perfectly as the old policy and prejudices had sundered them. He believed firmly

and literally in the promises of prophecy, that the world should beat its swords into ploughshares, and the lion and the lamb should lie down together; and that the way to this glorious era was through a better knowledge of each other.

"When we break away," said the Vicar, "out of our little island, and get beyond our worst fogs, those of national prejudice, which means national ignorance, and come into contact with men of other nations, we find we are friends. We love each other, we would not hurt the hair of each other's heads; we understand each other. If we understood each other as nations, we should never thirst for each other's blood; we do so because we are ignorant of our neighbours, of their interests, and of our own."

Mrs. Dorrington's heart echoed every word of the good old man, but it required long reflection to bring Mr. Dorrington to those views, so much in advance of their time; yet he came so far to see their correctness, that he gave consent for Vincent to spend at least a year on the continent, on condition that he pledged himself, the moment he returned, to enter one of the Inns of Court.

After Delmey's unhappy first departure to America, Mr. Dorrington wished Vincent to set out. The war was over, the way was clear, and time precious. But Vincent had shown no haste to be gone. He alleged as the cause that he did not feel willing to leave his mother while she was, as he knew, suffering so deeply on Delmey's account. To be left without one son at home he thought was cruel, and even dangerous to her health. Therefore, when his mother herself told him of his father's anxiety on that account, he only replied: "Time enough yet, dear mother."

But one day, as the mother and son were sitting in the Nest, engaged in arranging some pots of fresh flowers to send up to Christina, Mrs. Dorrington said:

"My dear Vincent, your father is very impatient that you should set out to Paris, and however loth I am to lose you, I do think you should go. In a few weeks you will be twenty years of age: it is quite time you should be making visible preparation for your profession."

"Dearest mother," replied Vincent, "I have been making the most earnest preparations for it these three years."

"Yes, you have been very studious—very

good ; but now, my dear, you must take another step. I dread that your father should think you are careless of the future. You know what we have had already to suffer."

Mrs. Dorrington sighed deeply.

" Well, dear mother, I will be off, then," said Vincent. " Don't let my father be fearful of me. I will be as ravenously ambitious, and as gigantically *work-brickle*, as Mr. Greatorex calls it, as he can desire. Or suppose," added he, laughing, " I do at once as Bulkeley has done —marry an heiress ! Don't you think that would satisfy my father without any farther study, any travelling, or anything? Bulkeley is a perfect model of practical wisdom in my father's eyes."

Mrs. Dorrington smiled. " Very good, Vincent ; but where is the heiress to come from ?"

" Oh ! from a hundred quarters," said the light-hearted youth, " they are as thick as bullaces all about. For instance, there's Miss Theodosia Vining—think of a wife so philosophically educated, dear mother, think of that—and the great Hall into the bargain !"

" It won't do, Vincent—I don't approve of it."

" Well, then," he added, " what do you think

of Miss Georgina Belfield? There's a fine, tall, dashing, handsome girl for you. See her on her horse in her riding-habit, and you must confess that she is really a most dangerous personage. And then that old Broxtowe Grange, perched on the hill opposite to your own room-windows, with its three hundred acres of fine land—that's by no means despicable with such a woman. Why you might have us always in your eye. We could telegraph all domestic news to each other. How the leg of mutton was roasting, and at what hour you were to come and share the first turkey of the season, to say nothing of news of chickens hatching, and lambs cherishing on the hearth, on cold spring days."

"It won't do, Vincent. I like that infinitely less than the other. Georgina Belfield is a fine, handsome girl; but only half-educated; has *brusque* country-manners, affecting to be lady-like, and has not a tenth of the true gentility and educated mind that your wife must have. And as for her three hundred acres—they don't make an heiress; they may make a very well-satisfied farmer, if he can make a farmer's wife out of such a showy girl."

"You are dreadfully difficult to please," said Vincent, laughing, though somewhat forcedly;

"but do you know that Bulkeley, that man of accurate judgment, thinks very highly of Georgina? She has been there these many times, and for months together. I have seen a good deal of her there."

"I am sorry for it," said Mrs. Dorrington, gravely. "You know Bulkeley's judgment and mine do not jump very well together in some things. I am sorry he has Miss Belfield there so much: I don't think she is a person that can do them either good or credit!"

"What!" exclaimed Vincent, "because she's a mere farmer's daughter, and not so accomplished as you could wish! But she plays most spiritedly, I can tell you."

"And dances as well as she rides, I dare say," added Mrs. Dorrington; "but it is not for her deficiencies, nor that she is only a farmer's daughter, that she is not one of my favourites. But, come—enough of Miss Belfield, and tell me where all your other heiresses are."

"Nay, stay a bit," said Vincent. "You must know, though, that my brother Bulkeley thinks so well of Miss Belfield, that he has strongly recommended her to me."

Mrs. Dorrington looked up with a quick glance of surprise: "He has!"

Yes, he has," continued Vincent. "He says that he has her interest very much at heart. That he thinks, in good hands, and where she could pursue her education, she would turn out a very fine woman. He has said plainly and earnestly to me—and this I wanted you to know—that if I could like her, he is sure that she thinks so well of me, and would be so proud to belong to our family, that I have only to speak, and the thing is settled. And then, though her land is not much, as Bulkeley observed, it abuts on Fulbourne, which you mean to buy, and—could add to it."

"No, never!" interrupted Mrs. Dorrington, with an expression of real indignation: "no, never! I mean that property, if ever it is mine, for poor Delmey and his children."

"Well, so Bulkeley said," continued Vincent; "but he added, that if you could but be dissuaded from this plan—"

"Dissuaded!" said Mrs. Dorrington, with stern vehemence.

"Dissuaded from it," proceeded Vincent; "yet there is this Dene."

"This Dene!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrington, looking most grievously angry; "what of this Dene?"

"Why, really, mother," said Vincent, "you won't let me speak, or I could tell you."

"Go on!" said his mother, endeavouring to command herself.

"This Dene," said Vincent, continuing his disclosure with a firm gravity, that only rivetted his mother's attention the more fixedly on him, "this Dene," Bulkeley observed, "is at present left to me; with a charge upon it to you; but so much," he said, "have I at heart your interest and Georgina's, that I would prevail on my father to make it over to you, with only the charge on it to me, which you could soon pay off. I am pretty well off, and it would please me to see a Dorrington still living at the Dene, when my father has ceased to enjoy it. I have that influence with my father, that I count on nothing more certainly than to succeed. Think," he said, "what a splendid fortune!—Georgina, a very handsome, and by nature clever woman—the Dene—and Broxtowe!"

Mrs. Dorrington had set down the flowers with which she was occupied, as Vincent went on. She looked at him with a gaze in which there was an expression of so deep anger and pain, that Vincent, seeing that he had deeply

hurt her, changing his manner, said, with a smile, but it was a melancholy one:

"But you don't believe, dearest mother, that I listened for a moment to these proposals?"

"No! Vincent, no! I am sure you rejected them with the indignation which they deserved. That your brother should coolly propose to disinherit his unhappy absent brother for ever!—to cast him out here!—to snatch even Fulbourne from him, as a last poor refuge against indigence, if this noble patrimony be denied to him—is a thing which wrings my heart beyond expression!"

Mrs. Dorrington, overcome by her feelings, leaned back in her seat, and wept bitterly.

Vincent, in the deepest concern, rose up, and, taking his mother's hand, said, with emotion:

"Dearest mother, I knew that I must deeply wound your feelings. Oh! what has it not cost me! But I could not bring myself to feel that I had done my duty without letting you understand this. That such views can be entertained by Bulkeley—that he can, for an indifferent person, propose to do the most serious injury to his own elder and unhappy brother, has astonished and wounded me beyond measure.

I have told him my mind on this matter with a warmth and severity which I believe he will not readily forgive; but that is of little moment, compared with the idea of my going away, and knowing that he can still be harbouring such selfish thoughts against Delmey, and especially as he has such influence with my father. The thing is distraction to me, and has made me feel unable to quit the spot. Till you knew it, I could not, and would not go; and to tell it you, seemed to me like deliberately stabbing you."

"You have done quite right, my son," said Mrs. Dorrington, with a sad gravity.

"But I could not have done it, I fear," said Vincent, "if I had not found that Mr. Greatorex saw into these things. That man is wonderfully clear-sighted. One day he took me into his garden, and said: 'My dear young friend, I saw you riding with Miss Belfield the other day along Fulbourne Brook. Be advised by me —keep clear there.'

"'Why,' said I, in a jesting way, 'my brother Bulkeley very much admires her.'

"'Bulkeley!' said the farmer, and he gave my arm a gripe at the moment that made me wince. 'God forbid that I should sow distrust between brothers! but don't advise with Bulkeley;

he is a deep chap. I have always feared that he lent that money to Delmey to get him disinherited. If not so, it was not like his usual penetration.'

"I rejected, dear mother, the farmer's suspicion with indignant emphasis. But he only said: 'Let my opinion lie in your own breast, but don't let it sleep there. If I am wrong, time will show, and may God forgive me! if I am right, may He defend the innocent!'

"But this is very cruel discourse, dear mother, for you," said Vincent, with an air of real anguish; "it makes me very unhappy."

"But there is more," said Mrs. Dorrington, looking round, pale as death, and her lips compressed with the torture of her inward feelings. "I must now do *my* duty—but not here. Follow me, my son."

The unhappy mother issued from the Nest—proceeded down the garden, with a pale countenance, but a rapid and firm step—crossed the head of the pond at the bottom, and took the way up the fir-plantations of Coolside. Vincent followed her with wonder, and an inward dread of some fearful disclosure. The facts which he had had to lay before his mother prepared him for it, and the evidence of a deep and painful

struggle in his mother's mind made it certainty. Upward she went in the same silent and awe-inspiring manner, never once opening her lips, nor turning her head; and he followed with a beating heart, and equally without a word.

When they reached the summer-house, she ascended the flight of steps, opened the door; —her look as he passed in was so bloodless and full of misery, that a cold shiver went through his heart and whole frame. She closed the door, and bolted it, and pointing to a seat at the centre table, she seated herself by her son's side, and laying her head on her hands, continued for some time as if overcome by her feelings, or as if sunk in deepest prayer. A suppressed groan, and the trembling of her frame, only announced to him that she was living. But at length she roused herself for her task, raised her head, and fixing her eye on the opposite wall, spoke in a faint, but guttural tone, words that thrilled through the ears of her son like fire.

What that disclosure was it is not our purport to repeat. It was the sacred communication of a bleeding-hearted mother to a son whose happi-

ness and whose honour it concerned. But it was such that nothing but the most holy obligation of duty could have constrained her, or have enabled her, to deliver. Such was the cost of feeling at which it was effected, that, once made, the unhappy mother sunk in an hysterical swoon, and her equally agonized son knelt before her, holding her hand, and weeping as if his heart would break.

Within half an hour of entering the summer-house, the mother and son again issued forth, and descended the pine wood, pale and in profound silence. On reaching the house, Vincent rushed up to his room, and flung himself on his bed, where he lay for a long time motionless, as if he had been dead. At length he uttered several deep groans, and rising with an air of deepest agitation, walked to and fro, repeating to himself:

"And can a brother do that? Gracious God! whence does he derive that nature? Can he thus, while wearing a habit of piety, deliberately seek to disinherit the unfortunate—his own flesh and blood? Can he commit crime, and to conceal it, strive to sacrifice the honour and the happiness of another brother who never did him

the slightest wrong? Oh, God! and with such a mother and such a father! But it is too terrible—too torturing to think of!"

For a moment, the unhappy youth clasped his hands on his pallid brow, as if it were torn by violent pains, and then rousing himself by a strong effort, he began rapidly to pack his clothes, and other articles for a journey. All day, and a greater part of the night, he continued his labours. His mother brought him several times refreshments, but he declined them except a large glass or two of water. In the early morning the mother and son took an affecting farewell. The youth went to his father's bedside, and commanding himself as much as possible, bade him on his knees adieu, imploring his blessing; and the servants carrying out his packages to the carriage, after one more sad and tearful embrace of his mother, he entered it and drove away—to years of travel that were then little dreamed of.

CHAPTER II.

VINCENT DORRINGTON soon found himself in Paris, where he sought to dissipate the mingled grief and indignation which weighed upon him, by actively employing himself in surveying the many objects of attraction in that gay and beautiful city. He traversed the various *Places*, the Boulevards, the Champs Elysées, the Jardin des Plantes ; gazed on the exteriors of palaces, churches, and other public buildings, all familiar to him by name ; wandered amongst the monuments of Père la Chaise, the shops of the Palais Royal, and the pictures of the Louvre ; but still without being able to fix his attention solidly upon them, or to rid himself of the

haunting sense of unbrotherly selfishness and crime.

He now comprehended many things which had been to him singular, or which he had perceived only with that half attention, that passing and darkling notice which we give with the mind occupied with other objects, till it is arrested strongly by some startling disclosure or particular motive. He saw only too clearly, the reasons for the seducer's anxiety to effect a match between himself and Georgina Belfield; for the liberality with which he had offered to forego the preference of his father's will; for the unprincipled coolness with which he had thrown overboard the claims of Delmey's orphan children. He could now comprehend the want of response on the part of his mother towards the religious bearing of Bulkeley, even before those later revelations which must have come with a stunning effect upon her: it was a genuine and unerring instinct of her own devotional heart, which had found no kindred life in that of her son.

He could understand the intense and even augmented sorrow which had of late shown itself in his mother, and which he had attributed to her continued dwelling on the loss of Delmey,

but which had another and still bitterer source. He could explain to himself why the blind in his mother's room, on the side giving a view of Broxtowe Grange, had been constantly drawn down, though it shut out the view of the pleasant Derbyshire hills; Mrs. Dorrington's plea being, when it was remarked, that too much light came from that side. He felt what a misery must press on his mother's heart, for which time could yield but little alleviation; and he did not rest till he had written her a most affectionate letter, and also addressed one to Bulkeley, giving free vent to his wounded and insulted feelings.

This done, he set himself steadfastly to carry out his objects in travel: he delivered his letters, and thus made many agreeable acquaintances; made occasional excursions to Versailles and St. Germain, and besides attending the lectures of the *Académie*, and the Royal College of France, on law and literature, he studied carefully the people and all the institutions of the place.

He passed the autumn and winter in Paris, making only an excursion in the autumn into Normandy and Brittany, and at spring pursued his way leisurely through the Netherlands to Germany. The memorable field of Waterloo; the old paintings and churches of Belgium, the

ancient municipal institutions of that country and of Holland, with their manufactories and mercantile life, all deeply interested him.

In Germany he continued two years, attending the lectures of several of the Universities, especially those on the Roman law, and on the philosophy and literature of the country. Thus he realized to himself the life which Jeremiah Gould had dwelt on with so much enthusiasm, and went deep and enthusiastically into its musical science. During the vacations of those years, he travelled with fellow-students over all the most celebrated scenes of that country from the Rhine to the Danube, including a peep into Hungary, and a more extensive one into Moravia and Bohemia, extremely interested in the melancholy tragedies of the Reformation in those countries. The last autumn of those years he passed in Scandinavia, charmed with the ancient Mythic and Saga wealth, and the mother tongue of the motherlands of England.

In Germany he had, at much expense of labour, endeavoured to discover the old fellow-students of Jeremiah Gould, that he might gratify him by news of them; but they were all dead or dispersed beyond his reach, except the simple pastor of a very poor *Dorf* in Westphalia, and a

distinguished minister of state of Prussia, by both of whom he was received with the most cordial delight, and who listened to the news of their old friend and *Thou-brother*, with tears of undiminished affection. From the minister, Vincent received letters which rendered him most essential service, not only in every part of Germany, but in Italy, and other countries.

With feelings of liveliest regret Vincent quitted Germany early the following spring, and, attended by two of his attached brother-students, he passed through the Black Forest to Schaffhausen, and to Basle, where his friends took their sorrowful leave; and he pursued his way down the wild valley of the Rhone, intending to explore the south of France, and to penetrate into Spain. The love of nature and of men, Vincent had drawn from his mother, with a feeling as intense and poetical as her own; and it was with a wonderful enjoyment that he now wandered on, having on his left the blue and rushing river, and the dark pine-woods and magnificent scenery of the Alpine range. He saw the Ain, the Soane, the Drome, and the Durance, pour their wild waters into the greater river; made a delicious *détour* into the volcanic regions of Auvergne; lingered with delight

amid hidden villages, conversing with their simple people; visited the factories of Lyons, and then struck across the country, through varying tracts of vineyards, sandy wastes, marsh lands, and dark pine-woods, to the very Atlantic.

It was in a wretched inn in the Landes that he met with a fellow-countryman, who was on his way to Spain. This was Mr. Bathurst. A very little conversation with this young gentleman of high family, and of his own age, determined him to accompany him. They soon found that a close affinity of views and tastes, and a keen enthusiasm for travel, awoke in their bosoms a mutual friendship of the most unreserved and delightful kind.

Mr. Bathurst, destined for diplomatic life, was bound on an extensive tour to the East, and the temptation for Vincent was too powerful to be resisted. His representations of the advantages to be derived from this journey, combined with the character and position of his companion, overcame his father's reluctance, and his mother's fears and anxieties; and for the two following years the career of these two young men was one of the most exciting adventure and genuine romance.

After a rapid tour in Spain, visiting Madrid and many of the scenes where the British arms had so recently won so much renown, they embarked at Gibraltar for Egypt. Skirting the shores of ancient Carthage, they were borne by the sight of it into the great events of the ancient world, to be recalled by Alexandria to still greater events in which their countrymen had played their part so gloriously. The presence of the great conqueror of modern times haunted them amid the Pyramids, mingled with that of the ancient Pharaohs, and their nations of toiling slaves.

They stood before the colossal sphinxes, and the colossal statues of Rameses, Memnon, and Osymandyas; explored with awe, and ever augmenting wonder, the stupendous ruins of Thebes; the dread valley of the Tombs of the Kings; and all the pillar-wrecks of Luxor and Karnac, of Edfou and Assouan; where the sublimity of human genius and power is clothed with the mystery of ages, and falls on the soul with ineffaceable solemnity.

Hence they went on; encamped with the Bedouins in the Deserts; wandered by the Euphrates and Tigris, musing on the mounds of Babel and Mosul, where mighty cities of old

were supposed to lie entombed, and which recent researches have once more restored to the wonder of the world. They visited Palmyra and Balbec; domiciled with the Druse and the Soonee, in Syria; and partook of the hospitality of the Maronite, in the lofty wildernesses of Lebanon. Through the wonderous regions of the Levant they travelled on, guarded by the fame of their country's power, and the magic influence of the passport signatures of the dreaded ministers of England.

They passed the sites of the primeval churches, read once more Homer on the plains of Ilium, and entered the Morea, the scene of so many immortal memories. There war was waging; the armies of Ibrahim Pasha were in contest, with the revolted Greek; and the news of the death of Lord Byron at Missolonghi, met them with a melancholy shock.

It was only sometimes by disguising themselves as Greeks, sometimes as Turks, and sometimes guarded in their own characters by robber Klepht or Suliote bands, that they managed with huge labour, and through many dangers, to get sight of the land of Homer and Demosthenes. It was a strange sight to see the shepherds of the modern Arcadia, guarding

their flocks, armed with guns, knives, and pistols, and their dark, bushy beards presenting a striking contrast to their long, white, woollen garments.

It was still more arduous and perilous to reach Constantinople; but their long acquaintance with the East, its people and its language, gave them power to play the Turk, and make themselves familiar even with this then forbidden ground. Thence, by a wild route, through Albania and Dalmatia, they reached Trieste, and so Italy.

It is not our business to relate their adventures and their hair-breadth escapes. Spite of the protection of their country's name, and their own money,—and by their united means, they were enabled to travel in a style which gave them consequence, and purchased every sort of aid; they had plenty of perils to give piquancy to their journeyings, and imprint them deeply in their memories. Vincent on all possible occasions had written to his mother, and especially of their visit to the Holy Land, and to the various places endeared to her by the life and deeds of our Saviour. To her it was a proud thought that her beloved son had seen those spots with his eyes, and trod the streets

of Bethlehem, of Jerusalem—the Mounts of Olives and of Calvary. It was to Vincent a sacred pleasure to send her ample particulars of all they saw and experienced there; and it was the more so, as he deemed it his duty to alleviate thus as much as possible the anxiety of his own absence, and the weight of many home-thoughts that he knew lay sadly at her heart. But both she and his father had now grown extremely impatient for his return; and it was with pleasure that he announced to them his arrival in Italy, and his early progress homewards. Meanwhile, as this did not happen quite so soon as he expected, we will take a glance at what had been going on at Westwood in his absence.

Mrs. Dorrington had fitted up the pretty cottage on the outskirts of the village for her little orphan grandchildren, where Mr. Bathurst saw them. They were growing beautifully, full of happiness, and every day becoming more fondly attached to her, and rooted deeper into her heart. The eldest boy was now about seven, the little girl about four. Every day it was the greatest pleasure of Mrs. Dorrington to visit them, listen to their lessons, and to their little chatter. All had something of the dark com-

plexion of their mother; and every one now confessed that the little girl was—as Sally Horobin at first declared—very like both her mother and grandmother. She had the clear brunette skin and delicate features of the one—the large, thoughtful eyes, and contour of the other. As Mrs. Dorrington had never been blessed with a daughter, it is impossible to express the feelings of fondness with which she contemplated this little lively Inez.

And by the most singular chance in the world, Providence had sent her the most accomplished and charming of teachers in the world for her little charge. This was Miss Harriet Russell, with whose sunny apparition Mr. Bathurst had been so much struck.

In the bright summer weather of about a year ago, as Mrs. Dorrington was seated in the hay-field in the valley of the Dene, with her three grandchildren running and playing about her, a young and lovely woman was seen coming towards her. The haymakers, who were busy in the field, suddenly all turned their heads towards the small hand-gate at the bottom of the field; and Mrs. Dorrington looking that way in consequence, saw Sally Horobin pointing out to this young stranger her mistress, as she

was seated on a haycock, enjoying the beauty and vivacity of the scene and the merrily-chatting haymakers.

Mrs. Dorrington arose, and awaited the approach of the young woman. As she drew near, struck by the youthful grace and manner of this unknown person, she advanced to meet her, and received with much courtesy the apologies of the young lady—for such evidently she was—for her intrusion. There was something about her which at once opened the heart of Mrs. Dorrington, and filled it with a glow of pleasure. The young lady could not be more than twenty; her somewhat round face, extremely fair; her clear blue eyes, which though now grave, and in some degree clouded, were obviously naturally disposed to beam out brightly as the fair sky above them; her rich auburn hair, and graceful figure, bespoke a nature amiable, life-loving, and highly intelligent.

Mrs. Dorrington expressing her pleasure to see her, remarked that she did not recall having ever had the satisfaction of seeing her before. The young lady replied, that she was quite a stranger in that part of the country, and came, in fact, to solicit the protection of Mrs. Dorrington. Mrs. Dorrington, whose sympathies were

at once awakened in her behalf, said that she wondered how so charming, and even happy-looking a young person, could need the protection of any stranger.

"Ah, Madam," replied the young lady, while the tears started into her eyes, "if you will allow me to explain to you my situation, you will cease to wonder. It is with the hope of this condescension, that I have dared thus to intrude upon you. Fleeing for a place of safety from those who should be my natural guardians, it was but yesterday that, in passing through your county-town, I saw an advertisement for a schoolmistress, and hastened hither to solicit the situation."

"The situation! a schoolmistress! you surprise me greatly," said Mrs. Dorrington, with an air of wonder.

The young lady became somewhat flushed at this observation, and with emotion added:

"Yes, Madam, I am sorry to say that so too was Mrs. Parrymore, the lady to whom the reference was made. Yet I am in earnest; I feel myself, from my education, more than qualified for the mistress of a village school; yet it would essentially serve me, and I will answer for myself, that its duties shall be faithfully discharged."

"You greatly astonish me," said Mrs. Dorrington. "Your appearance is that of a lady of superior station and education."

"You are correct, Madam, in your impression; but my former position or my acquirements shall not cause me to despise the humbler duties I am ready to assume; I seek peace, protection; and I feel that near you I should not want them."

"You have been to Mrs. Parrymore?"

"Yes; to her the advertisement referred me, but I have here learned your character, and I long to throw myself at your feet, and implore your assistance. Ah! dear and honoured lady, all that know you, love and bless you, let me become one of that happy number."

There was an air of earnestness and feeling, an eloquence of truth and of an ingenuous nature in the whole expression of this lovely young woman, which, spite of the singularity of the circumstance, greatly interested her hearer. Mrs. Dorrington said:

"Strange as you are to me, I feel greatly interested in you. Come, you must sit down by me, on this haycock, and tell me all about yourself. There can be nothing you can hesitate to reveal; you are too pure and open in aspect to deceive me. I shall believe what you tell me,

and though Mrs. Parrymore is active in the management of the school, I have a still greater interest in it, and can secure the humble post for you, should it be really desirable, which, however, I cannot conceive."

The young lady blushed as Mrs. Dorrington made these observations, and before sitting down, said:

"You are very good, very good indeed, Madam; but Mrs. Parrymore was very abrupt with me, declared me much too fine a person for a village schoolmistress, and told me not to delay in her house, as she would not have me on any account."

Mrs. Dorrington smiled good-humouredly, but only added: "Well, sit down, my young friend. I don't wonder that she thought so. You strike *me* as much too fine a person for such an office."

"But I will dress as plain and humbly as you please. I will scorn no homely duty, shun no honest labour, that you may require."

"I feel sure of that," said Mrs. Dorrington, kindly, "but you cannot—Pray what is your name?"

"Harriet Russell."

"You cannot, Miss Russell; put off your fine person and fine manners, and if I am not mistaken,

your fine mind, with your dress. You would still be too fine, and that in the best sense, to be wasted on such an office; and yet no one thinks more seriously of education and its requirements than I do. But here we deal only with very simple elements. Come, sit down by me, and tell me all your heart."

This was said so kindly, that the young stranger was visibly affected by it, and as Mrs. Dorrington gave her her hand to seat her by her, she kissed the proffered hand with emotion, and wiped away some starting tears. The three little children were all gazing in silent wonder at the stranger, as she noticed their sweet looks with evident admiration, and inquired if they were Mrs. Dorrington's.

"They are my grandchildren," said Mrs. Dorrington. "But now my darlings," she added to them, "run and amuse yourselves, while this young lady and I talk a little."

The children scampered away as they were bid, and were soon seeking wonders in the next hedgerow, while Miss Harriet Russell told her story as follows.

CHAPTER III.

"My story, dear Madam, is a very short one, but it is not for that the less overflowing with danger and distress. It is my good fortune which, in some degree, occasions my unhappiness. I am the only child of an excellent and affectionate mother. My father, who was a gentleman, residing on his own property in Huntingdonshire, died when I was about fourteen. He was a good man, and I well remember our happiness while he lived. Our home was a lovely place in the village of Lemwell. Oh! how I still love our sweet Lemwell Lodge, with its large garden, full of flowers, and with a clear stream running along its bottom. There my childhood was a happy childhood, embraced in the love of the most affectionate parents. But my father died, and soon afterwards I was

sent to school at Huntingdon. My mother, during this time, was often away seeking relief from her sadness. Sometimes she was in London, sometimes at Bath, and sometimes on the continent; but during my holidays she always came and fetched me from the school, and took me with her, either to Lemwell, or where she went. Though I never could forget my father, I was still very happy with my mother.

"But when I was about seventeen, I was suddenly startled, and very much frightened, by the French master saying to me, when I went up to say my lesson to him:

"'Ah, Mademoiselle! I congratulate you, that your mother is married!'

"I felt as though I was shot, and should faint, but I collected my strength, and said:

"'Monsieur! how you frighten me. My mother is not married.'

"'*Mon Dieu!*' said the master, 'but what I say is true; and you not know of it?'

"He pulled a newspaper from his pocket, and showed me the announcement. There, sure enough, I read it, blinded by my tears. She had married a gentleman of the name of Topham. I rushed wildly to the lady of the school, and choked with my tears and sobs,

asked her if she knew this fact. She was as greatly surprised as myself; she had had no intimation whatever of it, and declared that it was cruel in the highest degree to have left me thus in the dark, and allow the intelligence to reach me in this abrupt manner. I wrote instantly to my mother, to tell her how much surprised I was, and received an immediate and affectionate answer, that she had written to me a month before, and that Mr. Topham had himself posted the letter. Ah, dear Madam! subsequent events convinced me that that cruel man had never posted that letter, and had thus occasioned the first, but the far least pang of the many which he has inflicted on me.

"Miserable as I was, my mother promised me that at the Midsummer holidays I should come home, and accompany her and my new father to Boulogne. But when the holidays arrived, I received another letter, saying that matters of great emergency had suddenly called my father to the continent, that they had not time to summon me, and that I must remain during the vacation at the school. Oh! what a sense of misery fell upon me! What a sense of coming, certain, but unconceived misery. I believed that my mother had ceased to love me, or

to care for me. That she had concentrated all her affection on her new husband, who did not know me, and who probably regarded me as an incumbrance. None but God can tell the overwhelming wretchedness and desolation of my heart. I rarely heard from my mother, and there was a strange constraint in her letters, so different from her former love—overflowing communications, which troubled me beyond expression. I regarded myself as abandoned, and alone in the world. I wet my pillow every night with my tears, and though I concealed them in the day, they were only shed inwardly into my heart; and I prayed to God, if my mother had ceased to love me, that I might die.

"Things went on thus for nearly twelve months, when a gentleman, an old neighbour of ours, called on me at the school. I recollected him well, and that my father was much attached to him. He was old, and in feeble health. He inquired if I was happy, and whether my new father was good to me?

"This question let loose all my grief, and I burst into a torrent of tears, that seemed as if they would never cease till my heart was broke. But at length I told the old gentleman, who

seemed much concerned at my passionate sorrow, that I was very, very miserable; that I believed my mother no longer loved me; and that I never saw her, and only received such letters as cut me to the heart.

"The old gentleman—Mr. Trevor—took my hand very kindly, and bade me try to compose myself. That he was sure that my mother did not love me less, but probably more than ever; but that he did not like my step-father; and it was the business of his visit then to speak to me on this subject. He bade me collect myself, and attend to what he was going to say with as much calmness and fortitude as I possibly could command. He then said that he was my guardian; that my property, on coming of age, would be ten thousand pounds, yielding an income of five hundred pounds a-year; that the same amount was left to my mother for her life, and then it was to come to me; that it was, in fact, the estate of Lemwell.

"That it was this property, he feared, which had induced Mr. Francis Topham to marry my mother; and that he had, he confessed, the most serious anxiety lest he should endeavour to persuade or compel me to make over my right in it to him. Mr. Trevor then addressed

me with a solemnity, and yet a kindness, that I shall never to my dying day forget. Dear Madam, these are his wise and forewarning words, as of an angel of God, sent by my dear and deceased father, which to this hour have sustained me through the most cruel and excruciating trials.

"'My dear young ward,' said Mr. Trevor, holding my hand in both of his, and trembling as he spoke, yet with a firmness of purpose which seemed to infuse strength even unto stoicism into me; 'dear daughter of an excellent man, and of my dear friend, I want you now clearly to understand that your property is your own, that your mother's property is your own; and that there is no power on earth which can, without your own consent, deprive you of this. Remember this!' he said solemnly, and fixing a sad but deeply significant look upon me: 'remember this! and let no persuasions, no menaces, no terrors, or compulsion of any kind ever induce you to comply with any demands of your step-father, nor of your mother—mind! nor of your mother, who may herself be urged, and even tortured, to induce you to this; never comply with any demand to sign away your right to your fortune. Remember! till you are turned twenty-one, no

such signing will be valid; but still do it not. Will you promise me this? It is of the most serious moment to you.'

"I was taken by surprise; but I replied: 'Dear Sir, I do not think I shall do such a thing; but if my mother should have great need of—'

"Mr. Trevor interrupted me: 'She cannot have need of it, if they are wise. They have no right to it, at your expense. But, my dear child, I tremble for you; and I am bound to tell you, that I know your new father to be a very bad and dangerous man.'

"I was struck through with terror at this declaration, and trembled violently.

"'I distress you, my dear Miss Russell,' said the old gentleman; 'but I have a solemn duty to perform—a solemn, sacred, imperative duty, to your father, and to you. You are young, and know not the world. Your new father—mark what I say—is a very bad and very dangerous man; he will make your mother miserable—you cannot altogether prevent that; but he will too, if he can, ruin you; and your property once gone, you will be miserable for life, and can never succour your mother, when she may, and assuredly will, want your aid.'

"My terror had now increased to an almost insupportable degree; my anguish was overwhelming; I exclaimed:

"'Oh! can that bad man thus be unkind to my mother?'

"'Ah! my poor dear lamb,' said the old man, 'that I should have to say to you such cruel things—but I must do it: this is the only time. I must do it, or you are lost. Your mother, dear child, is a wretched and deceived woman; she is in constraint, and is no longer her own mistress. Mr. Topham is a desperate and abandoned sharper and villain. He has flung huge fortunes into the vortex of the race-course and the gaming-table, and he will fling after it every shilling of yours, if he can, and reduce you and your mother to beggary and death.'

"Great as was my terror, I now felt that my indignation was becoming still greater. I felt my blood boiling in my veins, and, standing up erect before my guardian, I exclaimed:

"'Never, never shall the villain wrench from me my father's lands! No, Sir: I will die first. He may kill me, but shall not beguile me of my mother's and my own possessions.'

"The good old guardian clasped me in his

arms, and with trembling limbs, and streaming eyes raised to heaven, he exclaimed:

"'Great God! I thank Thee. Give to this dear child strength, as Thou hast given her a spirit like her blessed father's! Let her have Thy Almighty support, for she will need it. Oh!' said he, kissing me fervently on the forehead, 'you have given me real joy. Keep, my child, keep firm to that resolve, and all may yet be well. But, believe me, my dear ward, you will want all your resolution—all God's help. You will be tried, and that sorely. I am an old man, and the gentleman who was appointed by your father to succeed me, if I chanced to die before you were of age, is dead before me. If I go, who then shall stand by you? Remember, if it be so, that there is still God. God and the Lord Chancellor will be left to defend the orphan's right.'

"I knelt before the venerable man, and, as if inspired by some strong spirit, I clasped his knees, and said:

"'I will never yield: I vow it, dear Sir—I vow it, before God—I will never yield, while I have life and strength; so help me God!'

"'Amen!' said Mr. Trevor; "so help you God! If trouble come, cry to me on earth, and

to God in heaven. You will have to suffer, I feel persuaded; but be true to yourself, and you will triumph. I thank God that I have seen you.'

"When my guardian was gone, and I had time to reflect, I felt as though all my strength had gone from me. I saw, inexperienced as I was, a dark and fearful prospect before me. I was full of terror and distress.

"At the Midsummer holidays, my mother and step-father came to fetch me. I was struck with the proud, yet plausible bearing of Mr. Topham, and with the care-worn and anxious look of my mother. Mr. Topham was a tall, large man, of handsome person and a commanding manner. He appeared greatly struck with my appearance, and declared that he expected a child, and found a fine woman. There was a smile on his face, which struck me as insincere, and as scarcely covering a cruel and arbitrary temper. I inwardly recoiled from him, but he assumed a very frank and cordial air towards me, and said he felt that we should like one another; but I looked at my mother, and her appearance gave no hope of happiness. There was an expression of deep anxiety in her face, which she seemed to strive to hide, out of

terror. I recalled the words of my guardian, and inly prayed to God for strength.

"Mr. Topham told me that they were going to London and the Isle of Wight, for my holidays, and were come to take me with them. He expressed regret that the last year he had been so compelled to leave me behind. I obeyed with an inward terror. We left, and were soon in town.

"There—a new and wonderful world to me—Mr. Topham was extremely kind both to myself and my mother. He was gay, indefatigable in showing us everything that could please us; and my fears in some degree subsided, the more so as I saw my mother wore a happier look. After we had seen the principal objects of interest in town, Mr. Topham proposed, instead of the Isle of Wight, that we should go to Dover and Calais. We had no objection to make, and we went.

"From the hour that we crossed the Channel —oh! Madam, God only knows what I endured! Mr. Topham did not long rest contented at Calais; he led us on, by the charm of novelty, to Rouen—from Rouen to Paris. Here again he was extremely gay and obliging, going everywhere with us, showing us every-

thing; and it was when we expressed warmly and sincerely the gratification which he had given us by this delightful visit, that he first began to unfold his objects.

"He said, truly it was very charming, but very expensive; and he threw out an easy remark, that he was quite sure, however, that my guardian, at my request, would not grudge a proper allowance for the advantage of my seeing something of the world. I warned him not to rely upon that, for that Mr. Trevor was a careful, business man, and that I did not believe that he would make himself responsible for any extraordinary outlay. That he was tied to a certain annual sum for my education and support, till I reached my majority, and I was morally certain that he would not advance beyond that.

"I shall never forget the look he gave me, as I said this.

"'You seem very knowing, Miss Russell,' he said, 'for a school-girl.'

"'I know only,' I replied, 'as Mr. Trevor has warned me.'

"'Trevor has warned you!' he observed, sharply: 'then I will let him know whom he has to deal with. He shall find that you shall

have what is necessary to appear as becomes your fortune.'

"No more passed at that moment. I felt much frightened, and I saw my mother turn pale. Mr. Topham seemed to forget the circumstance: he continued as gay and obliging as ever; and it was not till a week afterwards, as we were preparing to set out for a brilliant *fête champêtre*, at d'Enghien, near Montmorency, that he said:

"'But, my dear Miss Russell, these gaieties, though very charming, cannot be enjoyed for nothing. Your old guardian must release his stern resolves of economy. You really must in your youth see *something* of life; and if he will not, it will be easy for you to give me an authority to raise money. I am your *natural* guardian, as all the world must admit, and we can easily manage without Mr. Trevor. Though you are a minor, I can rely on you.'

"'Don't ask me, Mr. Topham,' I replied firmly, 'to do anything without the consent of Mr. Trevor: I have promised him never to do anything of that kind, and I cannot do it. You may smile, but I have resolved through life never to exceed my income.'

"'You have promised!' he exclaimed, 'that

old scoundrel has exacted a pledge from you not to be guided by me ?'

" There passed an instant change over his countenance, most frightful to behold. It was no longer the face of a man, but of a fiend. It was actually black with passion, and so distorted that no one could have known him.

" ' It is well that you have spoken,' he continued, after a pause, and in a tone of such calmness as was to me more terrible than his unconcealed anger. It was the calmness of concentrated rage. It was like the silence ere the thunder bursts forth with its most deadly crash ! ' It is well that you have spoken in time,' he continued, in that calm, cold voice. ' I now know what I have to do. You will not expect me to incur expenses on your account, that you do not mean to concur in discharging.'

" ' I ask nothing, Sir,' I interposed quietly, ' that exceeds the limits of my allowance.'

" ' Very well,' said he ; ' but let us go, the carriage waits.'

" We arose in a state of agitation not to be described. I trembled, my mother was in tears. We entered the carriage, and drove off. We were totally strangers to the direction of Mont-

morency, but it seemed to me that we were driving in a very circuitous route, and getting deeper and deeper into a dense and obscure part of the city. At length we stopped before a very tall house in a very narrow and filthy street. Mr. Topham alighted, and requested us to alight also.

"'My dear Francis,' said my mother, in evident alarm, 'where have you brought us to? What is the meaning of this?'

"'Will you descend at once, Madam,' said the stern, haughty-looking man; and my mother was preparing to obey.

"'Don't, mother,' I exclaimed, 'we have no business here. I will not get out.'

"'You will not choose to have a scene, I think, Miss Russell,' said my step-father, with a calm severity; 'the slightest resistance, and the whole faubourg will run together. I *advise* you to be reasonable.'

"My mother implored me to comply. 'He can mean us no harm,' she said in a whisper to me; and as she gave him her hand to alight, I was compelled on her account to follow. Mr. Topham conducted us to the foot of a great, dirty common stair, and bade us ascend. As we began to do this, he returned hastily to the

carriage, and I heard it drive away. He joined us immediately, and at each landing desired us to ascend the next flight. The place struck me with horror and disgust. The abode was so filthy, so black with age, and want of all cleaning; and through a door, here and there, which stood open, we perceived families of a description in entire keeping with the place, congregating in the midst of the most revolting squalor.

"At length we reached the third or fourth landing. Mr. Topham knocked at a door, which was opened by an old hag of a woman, who on seeing him gave a deep courtesy, and exclaimed with voluble familiarity:

"'Ah, M. Mackarness! you have brought me some of your friends. Welcome, Monsieur, welcome!'

"'Good Madame Ronciere,' said Mr. Topham, in French, 'I am glad to see you well. Show these ladies to your very best room.'

"'With infinite pleasure,' said the revolting hag; 'always glad to see you, Monsieur.'

"The revelations contained in these exchanges of salutation, opened before me a world of horrors. Here was Mr. Topham familiarly addressed by another name, and as a frequent

visitor of this extraordinary abode. To my mother, who was totally ignorant of the language, much of this was fortunately lost.

" But we were now ushered into a room of considerable size, but almost bare of furniture, containing only a wretched bedstead, a small table, and a few chairs; the walls and everything being of the same vile, dirty character, as all besides in the house. When we had entered, the old woman withdrew with a fiendish smile; and Mr. Topham locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket, advanced to me with a smile more hideous than that of the old woman, and said:

" ' Miss Russell, this is a prison for the refractory. Look round: here you are entirely in my power. See, there is not a window which from the surrounding buildings looks this way. Here, I repeat, you are in my power; no one can help you, if you make any outcries; that is provided for; no one will attend. You have only then to consider *when* you choose to issue from this room, and from the entertainment you will find here; for the term of your acquiescence with my demands is the term of your egress hence.'

" Great as was my terror, yet I felt the spirit

which Mr. Trevor had evoked stirring in me. I stood firm and indignant. I was the more so because I saw my mother completely subdued before the will of that man, and, seating herself on the bedstead, give way to the weakness of tears.

" ' Mr. Topham,' I said ; ' you deceive yourself if you think of terrifying me into any surrender of property. I tell you, once for all, that I never will yield an iota on that point. I am prepared for everything, for cruelty, for death. And I see that you are an adept in vice. You bear an *alias ;* but I will not, while there is a God above, be bullied nor even tortured into compliance with any unjust demands of any man's.'

" The astonishment which this firmness and these words produced in him was evident. He stood and gazed on me for a moment, and then saying, with a ghastly smile, ' We shall see,' bade my mother follow him.

" ' No ! Francis, no ! I will not leave Harriet here,' exclaimed my mother ; and I rushed to her, and clinging round her, said : ' No mother, you must not leave me ; you shall not leave me to the mercy of this wicked man.'

" ' Madam,' said the monster, ' you had better not provoke me, or I will call help that

shall make you wish you had obeyed me.' He seized my mother by the arm, and dragging her to the door, tore me from her, and thrust her forth. I gave a piercing shriek, but no one came. The horrible man stood over me and said: 'Now, Miss Russell, do your worst, and see what will come of it. But I will be with you anon.'

"He passed through the door, locked it, and I heard him, after speaking to the old woman, go hastily away. When the sound of his footsteps died away, I sate down and endeavoured to reflect on my situation. A deep terror took hold of me. I thought how soon the words of my venerable guardian were verified, that I should be sorely tried; but I remembered too that he said, if I were firm and trusted in God, I should triumph. I fell at once on my knees, and cried with all my soul to God. I vowed before Him to stand fast, and trust in Him, and I felt my courage and my strength revive.

"I will not harrow your feelings, dear Madam, by the recital of all that I suffered in that room. For four days the wretch kept me confined. Daily, and more than once in the day, he came, and threatened me with things worse than death. He worked himself into terrible rages, and shook

and pinched me in his fury, and loosening my hair, dragged me by it around the room. Then resuming his calm appearance, he bade me think whether I would lead a life of infamy and incarceration, or one of freedom and pleasure. I disdained to reply to him farther than to bid him do his worst, for I had a strong persuasion that as he wanted my estate, he would be careful neither to dishonour nor destroy me.

CHAPTER IV.

"On the morning of the fifth day, Francis Topham came as usual, and after tempting and menacing as before, he bade me follow him. I did so. At the door of the house I found the carriage again waiting, and my mother seated in it. As I got in, my mother pressed my hand fervently, but did not speak. I observed that the imperial was on the carriage, and all packages disposed for a journey. I knew not whither we were bound; but after driving through the streets of Paris, I noticed by the sun that our course was southward. For days and weeks we continued our journey; and had my mind been at ease, I should greatly have

enjoyed it. We passed on through a variety of country; now over vast, naked plains; now through miles of vineyards, and the villages of cheerful peasantry; through great forests, and occasionally amongst the most charming hills. We went through Orleans, Dijon, Chalons, Lyons; but we rarely stopped in these towns, but in solitary, and often most miserable villages, where my step-father appeared well known, and where, from time to time, he renewed the simple question, whether I was prepared to oblige him by an authority on my property. My answer was always the same, and his reply only, 'Very well;' and we journeyed on.

"I resolved, on reaching Dijon, to fly to the Mayor, and throw myself on his protection; but my mother, whose spirit seemed completely broken, implored me, as I valued her life, not to attempt anything of the kind; to be patient, and even to some extent to comply with Mr. Topham's desire. She assured me that all attempt at escape would be vain: that Mr. Topham described me everywhere as his daughter, who, possessing the expectation of his large fortune, was resolved on making a match degrading to herself and abhorrent to him; and

that he was travelling to restrain this undutiful attempt on her part.

"My indignation on this discovery only redoubled my resolution never to yield. I assured my mother that, so long as Topham remained moderate in his treatment of me, I would continue acquiescent; but that, persuaded that no concessions short of my whole property would ultimately satisfy him, I should make none whatever.

"From Lyons we went on still, through Aurillac, Cahors, and across the Garonne. In our journey we continued our route, on one occasion, till midnight; and in the midst of a vast forest of gloomy pine, Mr. Topham ordered us to descend from the carriage, and walk up a steep hill, as the horses were tired. We obeyed: for my mother to hear was to obey; for myself, I rather liked the change. The strange, wild scene—the dark boles rising on each side of the sandy road—the deep, solemn sough of the wind in the branches above us—all, so far from impressing me with terror, seemed to elevate and rejoice my spirit. My mother grew fatigued before we reached the summit, and begged to be allowed to return to the carriage, which was coming on slowly

behind. I went on, and my step-father, who had not of late been very communicative, said to me, as if passingly: 'Are you not afraid in this gloomy wood?'

"'No,' I replied; 'God is here as much as in any other place.'

"He made no reply; but as we came to the top of the ascent, there was a roar of waters somewhere near, and he again said: 'See here! this is a scene that you do not every day witness.' He was quitting the highway to the right, whence the sound came, but I hesitated to follow him. He however seized my arm, and not to betray my alarm, I went as he desired me. In a few seconds we stood on the top of a precipice, down which thundered a wild torrent, its snowy foam shining through the summer night against the dark and shagged pines that hung here and there over it. My step-father still held my arm, and standing close on the brink of the gulf, he said, loud enough to be heard above the roar of the torrent:

"'One moment, and where would you be? Speak! now once for ever—comply, or you are lost!'

"My blood curdled at the sudden horror of the situation. I gave a start, and a shriek

but at the same instant it shot across my brain: 'Fear not; he will not murder you; your property would be for ever lost to him!' I stood firm and unmoved, saying only: 'Here, as everywhere, I can but die!'

"'Fool!' he muttered sullenly, and led me back to the carriage.

"After crossing the Garonne, we advanced into a wild and dismal country, partly sandy deserts, partly covered with thin woods of pine. We came at length to a solitary farm, in the open, level, country, where still Mr. Topham seemed well known, and was received by the farmer and his wife as an old acquaintance.

"The house was a wretched erection of mud, built round a court, in which lay brushwood for fuel, and a number of miserable carts and harrows, and similar things in great disorder. There were three or four savage dogs chained to a kennel, which set up the most furious barking as our carriage rolled in under the great ruined archway.

"Here we were shown into an upper room, to which we ascended by steps from the court, and here we were informed by Mr. Topham, that we were to take up our quarters for some time, whilst he amused himself with fishing and wild

fowl shooting. Our bedrooms were on the same floor, and there was no mode of issuing from the place, except through the court, the great gates of which were always locked, and the farmer's dogs giving instant notice of our appearance on the outside gallery, by their vociferous barking. Windows there were on the other side, but they were small, and secured by iron stancheons.

" All round lay vast salt marshes, intersected with dykes, and in places overgrown with sedges and reeds. During the day we could hear no sound, but the occasional low of cattle that ranged these marshes, the bleat of innumerable sheep, or the lonely cry of the curlew. Through the heat of the day we could see the rays of the sun burning on bare sands, and quivering in the sultry air.

" There was no one living here, or, so far as we could judge, for miles, except the farmer and his wife. They were people of sixty years of age apparently. The man had more the look of a fowler than a farmer, and in fact, made his living by fishing and shooting the wild-fowls on these dreary moors. His wife, a tall, thin, and sun-browned woman, with very grey hair, was often away to the nearest town, selling

her husband's mallards or plovers, and we were for days together, left alone in the house. When we were quite alone, I felt to a degree happy. My persuasion that the security of my property was my own security, buoyed me up above terror and grief wonderfully. I resolved to be patient till the day of my deliverance, however distant, came. But on other days, Topham, or Mackarness, or whatever be his real name, remained with us, and then these were days of insult, menace, and actual torture.

"The wretch renewed his threats of the worst kind, he flew into his terrible rages, and dragged me again round the room by the hair, flinging me down sometimes with violence on the floor. On more than one occasion, he bound me down on my face on my bed, hung weights to my hair, and left me there for hours, locked in, so that my mother could not release me from my sufferings. He vowed that unless I acquiesced in giving him a power to raise money on my property, I should never quit that building alive. That he would kill me, and plunge me weighted with stones to the bottom of the marsh.

"But nothing could subdue my resolution. I had made up my mind to conquer by patience or to die. I believed that God, at the prayer of

my venerable guardian, had inspired me with this indomitable endurance. But how were we to escape from our wretchedness? No one came there but the farmer and his wife, and they kept themselves aloof from us, or preserved an unconquerable taciturnity. But one day—surely God decreed it—as I was looking out of my small window over those desolate marshes, I saw a boy coming riding on a black, shaggy pony towards the house. He rode up, and said that he had letters for Mr. Topham. That they were addressed '*pressé*,' and that the postmaster of the next town had sent them at once.

"Luckily Topham was absent in the marshes. I ordered the boy to go round to the great gate, and ring the bell, but before that to listen to me. I had a letter ready written and concealed in my bed-clothes, for the chance of any opportunity. I addressed it to the Mayor of the place the boy come from. It was describing our actual situation, and calling for help. I threw it down to the boy, and after it a piece of gold, which I told him was the reward for his carefully delivering it. That he must not, on his life, show it to the woman of the house, or let her know that he had held any communication with

me. That I was an unhappy young lady kept prisoner, and that he must be brave and help me.

"The boy seemed to comprehend the whole affair with admirable quickness, pocketed the coin with a low bow, secreted the letter in his big boots, and rode round the house. Presently afterwards I heard the bell give a lusty ring, and in a very short time the boy came again round the corner at a brisk pace on his wild-looking pony, cast a glance up at my window, but without turning his head, gave me a significant look, and rode off. The old woman the same instant appearing at the corner of the house, cast a look towards my window, from which I cautiously retired at the first glimpse of the red handkerchief which always bound her head, and then after staring for some time after the lad as he trotted away over the moor, she disappeared again to her kitchen.

"The next day an official-looking personage, attended by two or three others, rode up to the house. Mr. Topham was summoned by the old woman with a mysterious look, and after being some time absent, he returned, with an expression of dark fury in his face, which convinced me that my message had procured this visit.

Whether it was the Mayor of the next little town, or what explanation he got, we never learned, but he soon afterwards rode away without seeing us, and Mr. Topham, as if perfectly at his ease, took a gun and went over the marshes to join the farmer.

"But it was soon evident, that, by some means or other, my message had taken effect. In a day or two, the old woman returned from town at a much earlier hour, called out Mr. Topham, and there was a long and earnest conversation between them in the passage, but too far off for me to catch more than the words, 'Peasantry—being very angry —and vowing a rescue.' That day, a cloud of the deepest shade of rage lay on the countenance of Topham. The carriage was dragged from under its shed in the court, cleaned and packed for a journey, and at a very early hour of the morning we were ordered to get into it, and we set out.

"The postilion who had brought horses was the same who had driven us the last stage, in going thither. We retraced our route as far as Dijon, where we occupied good apartments in an excellent inn, and where Mr. Topham seemed to have taken a new view of our relations—con-

fessed that he had been driven to harsh and inexcusable lengths by the pressure of urgent engagements; but that his brother George had most generously arranged these for him, and was coming there to join them.

"'You will like George,' said he familiarly to me; 'I recommend him particularly to your favour: and though, Miss Russell, you have obstinately refused to oblige me pecuniarly, you can still do it as profoundly by taking George into your good graces.'

"I felt there was a meaning in this. I suspected a new phase of the plot; and when I saw this George Topham, I was satisfied of it. He was a man of middle age, slender make, and a character of mingled weakness and dissipation was stamped in the broadest manner on his face. He was obviously the fitting and the willing tool of his more able and daring brother.

"This man lost no time in assuring me that he had heard so much of the great strength and nobility of my character from his brother, that he had made this long journey to solicit my hand. He knew, he said, that Francis in his troubles had been very overbearing and harsh to me—it should be his business to make me amends for it.

"I listened with the most unutterable disgust to this proposal: the plot was too thinly covered to escape any one's penetration. I was to be handed over to the weak brother, to become the certain prey of the strong one. But I had now learned some degree of policy, and I simply returned for answer, that I could make no decision till I reached England.

"Mr. George Topham professed to be quite satisfied with this avowal. Good-humour appeared restored to my step-father, and both brothers were as easy and agreeable as they could make themselves.

"We continued at Dijon for many days, and made many drives and excursions in its neighbourhood. One evening my mother, on the point of setting out with us, declared that she had a violent headache, and begged to be excused. I learned afterwards that she was *instructed* by her husband to say this, not knowing what was the object of it, and having now come habitually to bow to every dictation from him. We drove on for some miles. It was a lovely evening, and the scenery peculiarly pleasing. My companions were in the most agreeable of moods, and we at length found

ourselves in a forest at the meeting of four roads.

"Here Mr. Topham stopped the carriage, which he himself was driving, and, turning to me, said:

"'Miss Russell, you have held out hopes to my brother, on reaching England. George is deeply in earnest—he is quite worthy of you. There is no reason in the world why you should not proceed at once to England, and we have agreed that you shall go now. The diligence for Paris will pass here in half an hour, and George will see you safe on your journey.'

"Imagine the shock which this abrupt speech gave me! I was for a moment struck dumb, but I recovered my speech to protest vehemently against the proposal—to declare that I would do no such thing.

"'Miss Russell,' said my step-father, 'you have trifled with us too long. Motives stronger than fear urge us. This moment you consent to accompany George, or this moment you cease to exist. I have resolved; refuse, and the shades of this forest shall bury you for ever from all human knowledge.'

"I declared again that it was impossible;

that I had no clothes with me—had, of course, made no preparation.

"'They are made for you,' said Topham, 'your clothes are already sent on to meet you at the next stage.'

"The brothers now looked anxiously for the arrival of the diligence, while I sate trembling with surprise and terror. But at this moment, instead of the diligence, a traveller on foot emerged from the forest trees, and advanced towards us. He was a young man in blouse and straw hat, and with knapsack on his shoulders; apparently one of those summer tourists whom you so often meet thus equipped on the continent.

"As he approached I saw that he was a gentleman, and there was something in his appearance that inspired me with a desire to appeal to him for assistance. He was young, rather tall, but actively and strongly made. The freedom and elasticity of his gait bespoke vigour and an inurance to exercise. His dark hair and moustache seemed to belong to the South. The brothers, as if divining my thoughts, said to me:

"'You will not make any alarm: it may cost you and others their lives.'

"But as the stranger drew near, and evidently was struck with something in the appearance of our group, my feelings became uncontrollable, and I cried, in French:

"'Help!—help! for God's sake, Monsieur!'

"The young man cast a glance of surprise on us, as he rapidly advanced, and inquired what was amiss.

"'Be so good as not to interfere, Sir,' said Mr. Topham. 'This young lady is my daughter, and would escape from my authority. Please to withdraw, Sir; we await the diligence.'

"'It is false!' I cried. 'In Heaven's name, Sir, help me to Dijon, and I will satisfy you, before the magistrate, of the truth of the case.'

"The stranger was now at the head of the horses. Topham endeavoured to drive on, but the young man boldly laid his hand on the reins, and said:

"'Do you really need assistance, Madam?'

"'As God lives!' I cried. 'Help me to Dijon!'

"'Stand back, Sir! at your peril!' exclaimed Topham, assuming a desperate look, and raising his whip as to strike the stranger.

"'Peril!' exclaimed the young man, with a look of haughty defiance, 'for that I always go prepared,' at the same instant drawing a double-barrelled pistol from his breast, and levelling it at Topham.

"At the sight of this weapon, and the daring aspect of the stranger, never did the cowardice of the bully more flagrantly betray itself. My base step-father, and his craven brother, turned pale as ashes, and appeared to expect every moment a bullet through their heads.

"'Dismount, Messieurs!' said the intrepid stranger, and they dismounted precipitately. 'Withdraw,' continued he, and they walked off to some distance. The stranger leapt into the seat, and turning, said: 'Messieurs, if you dare to follow within pistol-shot, I shall shoot you down without further warning.'

"He gave the horses the whip, and we proceeded on the road to Dijon at a rapid rate. My joy at this delivery, and my terror lest the brothers by some means should overtake us, were so great that I could scarcely breathe forth my thanks to my gallant deliverer. As we drove on, he begged me to relate briefly the facts of the case. When I told him that I was an Englishwoman—

"'Ha! a countrywoman of mine! The more reason that I should succour you.'

"At hearing that my deliverer was an Englishman, I could not avoid uttering a cry of joy. I seemed to feel tenfold in security. I longed to ask him his name, but he was putting question after question to me in order to be able to explain the affair to the Mayor of Dijon—and we now were already at the town.

"My driver did not slacken his pace. The people swarming in the streets enjoying the fine evening saw with astonishment our rapid course, and no doubt my own excited appearance. The stranger only paused a moment to inquire for the abode of the magistrate, and then drove at full speed thither. Luckily the worthy magistrate was at home. In a few words my deliverer had explained the circumstances, and the magistrate declared that I should receive his most energetic protection, and every assistance to reach my own country. On hearing this I fainted. The sense of having escaped from the hands of those terrible men was too much for me.

"When I recovered my consciousness, I found myself laid on a couch in the worthy magistrate's house, and attended by his wife and daughter, but my deliverer was gone. Like myself, the

magistrate had in his flurry forgotten to ask the name of the handsome young Englishman, as the ladies called him: but said, 'he is somewhere at one of the hotels—I will send to inquire after him.' He sent, but it was in vain. Nothing was to be heard of the stranger, and from that day to this I have never had the satisfaction of knowing to whom I owed my freedom."

"Could it be my Vincent?" said Mrs. Dorrington, thoughtfully,—"he was in France about that time—and it is so like him."

"Your son, Madam? Had you a son then in France? asked Miss Russell.

Yes," said Mrs. Dorrington—"but no! it could not be Vincent—he would certainly have told me in his letters of so remarkable an event. Pray go on."

"The worthy Mayor of Dijon did all in his power to serve me. I wrote to my guardian and informed him of what had taken place, entreating him to send a trusty person to attend me home, and money for the purpose, for I had none. In due course a letter arrived from Mr. Trevor, assuring me that he had attended to my wishes with the utmost dispatch,

and that the tried servant of a friend of his in town, who spoke French and knew the country, would be with me on the very heels of the post. In a few days his servant arrived; and after having passed a most agreeable time in the kind and intelligent family of the magistrate, I set forth under good care for England.

"The Tophams, carrying my mother along with them, had taken their speedy departure from Dijon for Paris the very evening of my escape; the innkeeper having sent and claimed their carriage, which the stranger had left at the magistrate's door.

"On arriving in town, I found a letter from Mr. Trevor, stating that he was very infirm, and confined to his house, and advised my remaining for a time in town in the family of a friend to whom he had written, as there least likely to be discovered and liable to the persecution of the Tophams. There I remained till lately, when I accidentally encountered Mr. Topham at a public place, and again found myself watched and waylaid by him. This alarmed me so much that I resolved—it may seem to you a wild scheme, but I was desperate—to go far off down into the country, and bury myself in some

obscure place, where these wicked men should not find me till I was of age, and having my property in my possession, could myself call on the laws for my defence.

"Unknown even to the family in which I resided, further than by a note left to assure them that I sought safety in the profoundest obscurity, and should as early as possible inform them of my retreat, I got into the Northern mail, and stopped not till I reached your county-town. There, reading the local paper in my room at the inn, I saw the advertisement of the school—and here I am."

We may imagine the astonishment of Mrs. Dorrington as she listened to this narrative. So absorbed was she, that she had but a dreamy consciousness of seeing Sally Horobin come long ago and carry off the children. As Miss Russell closed her relation, Mrs. Dorrington rose up, saying: "What an extraordinary story! What a very extraordinary story! Who shall, dear Miss Russell, say that the days of romance are at an end? But what a wonderful fortitude you possess! What a marvellous strength of mind! But I thank God you are come hither. Surely God has sent you. Never mind the

school—remain here in your own character. Mr. Dorrington is a lawyer: he will protect you —he shall be your guardian; and a more able one you will not need. But let us go. I am impatient to introduce you to him, and to let him hear all."

Miss Russell took Mrs. Dorrington's offered arm with expressions of grateful acknowledgment, and they were soon at the Dene.

Mr. Dorrington listened to the story with a surprise equal to that of his wife. At first he was inclined to incredulity, with his lawyer caution; but when he looked on the fair, open, and truthful face of Harriet Russell, he forgot his doubts; and the moment that he heard the name of Mr. Trevor, he could, with his extraordinary knowledge of the landed gentry, tell Miss Russell many things about his family and property, and the people of her own neighbourhood, which surprised her in her turn.

That evening, Miss Russell wrote to Mr. Trevor, and to her friends in town, to apprize them of her place of retreat, and to assure them that she now felt that she was in such strong and good hands, that she should fear no attempts of her enemies against her. By return of post

came letters both from Mr. Trevor and her London friends, which would have settled all doubts as to the truth of her singular history, had any such remained in the minds of Mr. or Mrs. Dorrington.

CHAPTER IV.

THE appearance of Miss Russell in Westwood, caused much excitement and curiosity. There she was at the Dene, looking every inch a lady, and a very lovely one too, and treated by Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington with the greatest attention and regard; and yet Mrs. Parrymore declared that she had actually come to offer herself as the village schoolmistress. This was wonderful. An active whisper and a gossip flew through Westwood, for it was not proof to cause and effect, any more than any other place on this wonder-loving earth. The true story of Miss Russell's coming hither, and the motives for it, were only, and in strict confidence, communicated,

for sufficient reasons, to the Vicar and Farmer Greatorex. It was quite enough for all else to say that she was a young lady of good family and fortune.

"Of good family and fortune!" said Mrs. Parrymore; "then why did she seek the situation of village schoolmistress, with house-rent and thirty pounds a year? Was she playing off a hoax or a quiz upon me, or is she in reality now imposing on the Dorringtons?"

One or the other, it appeared clear to Mrs. Parrymore that she must have done. If she really wanted the post of schoolmistress, she could not be a lady of fortune; if she was a lady of fortune, she had done a very unadvised and giddy thing, and had put an affront upon her, Mrs. Parrymore. Out of that dilemma, in Mrs. Parrymore's opinion, she could not escape; and Mrs. Parrymore felt extremely mystified, extremely scandalized, extremely indignant, and most extremely curious. Really the Dorringtons, with all their good qualities were very incautious and very easily imposed upon. Ah! one would have thought they would begin to take warning. How poor Delmey had been taken in by that Dakeyn. How Mrs. Dorrington's brother and mother had patronized that Shelcross. How

absurdly they did value that Farmer Greatorex, who made the most extraordinary blunders in his conversation,—a man of no education whatever.

All this, Mrs. Parrymore very freely said, both in-doors and out. She declared an explanation absolutely necessary. Captain Parrymore very quietly said, as he buttoned the tops of his drab shooting shoes, and prepared for a round amongst his haymakers—that he had no doubt but that Mrs. Dorrington, or the young lady herself, would give her an explanation if she would go down and ask them. And Miss Theodosia Vining added:

"But really, aunt, the young woman did look quite like a young lady, and was very sweet-looking; but perhaps she is eccentric."

"Eccentric!" said Mrs. Parrymore, "my dear Theodosia, it is some way beyond eccentricity when young ladies run off from their friends, and from heaven knows what, and offer themselves as village schoolmistresses. I hope you don't contemplate anything of the kind."

All agreed that it was curious, extraordinary, incomprehensible; and it only grew more so when Mrs. Parrymore, sallying forth found that the Vicar and Farmer Greatorex were full of

admiration of the beauty and amiability of this strange young woman, and could see nothing remarkable in her having jumped out of the clouds, as Mrs. Parrymore declared she had. And to think of offering herself as the village schoolmistress, if she really were a lady!

"It was very kind of her," said Farmer Greatorex.

Mrs. Parrymore looked indignant, but then it was no wonder that the farmer did not see the flagrancy of the thing, he had no idea of rank and proprieties.

"It was really good and unassuming of her," said the Vicar; and Mrs. Parrymore thought the worthy clergyman beside himself. But then he was so bewitched by Mrs. Dorrington, that he believed anything she told him.

Mrs. Parrymore was resolved to know the bottom of this mystery, and have an apology if the young woman really were a young lady, and expose her and drive her out of the village if, being only a young woman, she were passing herself off as a young lady. She set out, and met Mrs. Dorrington coming up the village, and leaning on the arm of the strangest of strangers —Harriet Russell.

Mrs. Dorrington was looking as happy and

confiding as if she were leaning on the arm of a daughter; and the young lady was looking as bright, as sweet, and as happy as if she had found a mother. Mrs. Parrymore shook hands very cordially with Mrs. Dorrington, and made a very formal bow in return of the respectful salutation of Miss Russell.

"This is our new schoolmistress," said Mrs. Dorrington gaily.

"Yes, truly, what is all this?" said Mrs. Parrymore; "there is something that wants explaining. What is this young person? She asks for the place of village schoolmistress; and now I am told she is a lady of property. How am I to understand this? what am I to think of it?"

"Precisely as you hear and see, my dear Mrs. Parrymore," said Mrs. Dorrington, smiling. "Miss Russell is a young lady of good property, who really, and out of no affectation, no whim, wished for the place of our schoolmistress."

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Parrymore; "that is very odd. I am really curious to know what are the causes which can make it necessary for ladies of property to turn village schoolmistresses.

"There are causes, dear Mrs. Parrymore,"

added Mrs. Dorrington, "good, tangible, substantial causes, which will all be explained in time; but for the present be so good as to take our word for it, that all is quite right."

But taking another's word for a mystery is just the last thing that ladies are said to be fond of, and is really the last that anybody is fond of. Mrs. Parrymore felt that there was something that was not to be confided to her, and she was of course, and very naturally, piqued.

"Well, it may be so," said Mrs. Parrymore, with dignity; "but Miss Russell, if that be her name, will excuse me if I cannot, under these circumstances, give my consent to her taking the place. There should be no romance about a schoolmistress, with house-rent and thirty pounds a year."

"I quite agree with you, dear Mrs. Parrymore," said Mrs. Dorrington. "*I* do not approve of Harriet being the schoolmistress, and so I propose to arrange it thus:—Harriet shall be the governess of my dear grandchildren, and the young woman who now fills that office shall, if you please, be the schoolmistress."

Mrs. Parrymore looked astonished — confounded; but said, with an air of great affected concurrence: "Oh! that will suit *me* very well.

Miss Thorney is a very prudent and sufficiently educated young woman; she will do very well in the school, I dare say."

"Pray allow me to say, dear Madam," observed Miss Russell to Mrs. Parrymore, "that I feel that you have a right to consider it strange of me applying to you for the situation of schoolmistress, possessing, as I do, property of my own; but I can only say at this moment, that I was sincere in the wish to obtain that situation; and had I obtained it, should not have made it known that I had any other resources, at present. One day you shall know all, if it will interest you."

Mrs. Parrymore thought: "And you have told all to the Dorringtons, but not to me."

She bowed gravely, shook hands with Mrs. Dorrington, and went her way.

And here we feel that it is proper to give the reader some little knowledge of Mrs. Parrymore and her family, or we should be accused of being as close and mysterious as Mrs. Parrymore herself thought the Dorringtons were about this Miss Russell, whom they had, in her phrase, caught up thus suddenly into their intimacy.

Mrs. Parrymore was a lady who had evidently the idea of being very ladylike. She

was a woman of slender make, of middle height, and fine figure with extremely small and delicate hands, a face of good, somewhat sharp features, which had in youth been considerably handsome, and a voice soft and modulated according to what she believed to be a truly ladylike intonation; it was something formal, as was her dress and manners, but complimentary, bland, and studiously correct.

Mrs. Parrymore had no children; had never had any. She had everything about her establishment in the nicest order, and with the strictest attention to grade and etiquette. The house was furnished with considerable taste, though it had been done by means of auctions and bargains at a wonderfully little cost. The gardens and grounds were exquisitely kept, though she got her gardeners at the very minimum of wages. Her carriage and coachman were both in the nicest style, though the man did discharge the duties of groom, and wait at table as well. She was careful to keep up a proper intercourse with the gentry of the country round, and knew how to be civil and polite to those whom she meant to keep at arms' length. It was very probable that she married

the Captain when his pay and income altogether were very small, and she had thus acquired the art of meeting-and-tying gentility in the most miraculous perfection.

Farmer Greatorex declared that Mrs. Parrymore had the knack of making a little go the longest way of any woman living. If she gave a subscription, though it was of only a fifth of the amount of that of the Dorringtons, or of the farmer himself, she paid it with a punctuality and dignity that made it feel of really more consequence. Her farthing, the farmer said, always felt heavier than another person's guinea. Nobody dared to call her mean, she was only careful, and knew how to manage. She had the skill to make the fullest impression in everything she did. She called on the Greatorexes, and was very pleasant and polite; but she took care that, though Mrs. Greatorex and her daughters called on her and her niece, her niece should never visit the Miss Greatorexes alone. When she went, it was close at her own side. She invited the Greatorexes to tea occasionally, and went to tea there with the Captain and Miss Vining; but she never invited the farmer and his family to her great annual party, at which

she assembled all her great aristocratic acquaintance. She invited the Dorringtons, though they seldom went.

At this the farmer used to pretend to be very much piqued, though no man had a more instinctive sense of social fitnesses than himself, but it served him to joke and criticise Mrs. Parrymore in his own jovial way upon, in his merry and somewhat rhodomontading hours.

"Here's my friend Gould," he would say, "must go and hob-nob with all the great folks, while Farmer Greatorex is shut out. Now, if money makes the man, why I reckon I could make a dozen Parson Goulds. But then, thinks Mrs. Parrymore, how the lords and squires would stare at that honest farmer's blue coat and big buttons, and at his farm-yardlings. A cup of tea for the farmer, eh? Well, well, if I'm too vulgar for Mrs. Parrymore on her highdays and holidays, why Mrs. Parrymore's vastly too genteel for my money, so I dare say I shall sleep o' nights, and sell my cheese at Michaelmas, without going to Mrs. Parrymore's double-gilt high-fliers."

The farmer was, therefore, always ready to go coursing with the Captain, who was a very quiet,

sensible man, reading his daily paper, looking over his land, and coursing and shooting at his ease. But whenever the famer's family was invited to tea at the Parrymores, Greatorex was sure to cut his keenest jokes upon it. He would have tea at home first, and the beef set on the table, and say:

"Come, dame, come, girls, you must lay in a good substantial foundation, for Mrs. Parrymore knows how to starve people on the most unexceptionable principles. Lay in prog for the next six hours. Mrs. Parrymore's two or three little wafers of bread and butter, and two or three little biscuits, and two or three little cups of tea, like acorn cups, are all very well to top up with; but, blame me, if they are not enough to give a hungry man th' hydrophobia."

On one occasion the farmer dreadfully scandalised his whole family by bringing away one of Mrs. Parrymore's bits of bread and butter in his pocket-book to see, as he said, if he could not blow it over the moon; and sure enough he did manage to blow it across the room, and then holding it up in his thumb and finger, said he thought he should have it framed and glazed, and hand it down to posterity as a curiosity.

It should be called the " Westwood Wonder, gentility in bread and butter, twenty to the ounce."

Mrs. Parrymore had educated her niece, whom she and the Captain had adopted, on the most philosophical principles. She proposed to show in her, both physically and intellectually, what education could effect. Childless ladies have always the sublimest ideas of education. Mrs. Parrymore had, therefore, adopted the plans of a French lady at that time very much celebrated, and who kept a large boarding-school regulated on this system. She proposed to make Miss Theodosia strong as a lion, swift as a roe, and rosy as the rising sun. To accomplish this object, she set her every morning to run round the garden in leaden-soled shoes. Every week an additional, though very thin, leaf of lead was added to her soles, so that in time they were to become very ponderous indeed, and yet so imperceptibly so, that she should be able to run as well with a pair of shoes of a few pounds each, as she otherwise would have done with ordinary ones. And if she could run as well with these heavy shoes, what might she not be expected to do when she at length threw them off, and ran in light ones? The result,

it was quite sequential to suppose, would be something like the flying of a cloud, or of a first-class race-horse.

On the same principle, every night, Miss Theodosia carried up stairs to bed a basket of sand on her back. The basket was made to fit precisely to the back, and was accordingly called a dosser. The dosser was so easily weighted, that Miss Vining, who began this system when about fourteen, and carried it on till near twenty, never felt the additional spoonful of sand, which was daily added, but which in time amounted to a serious load. Every night, Miss Theodosia carried to bed, and every morning carried down her dosser, with her daily additional spoonful of sand, till the burden was become ponderous as Christian's pack, in the "Pilgrim's Progress."

Now it was very evident—at least it was so to Mrs. Parrymore—that if the young lady was daily carrying more, without feeling inconveniently the so-nicely increased weight, she must be growing stronger and stronger; and it was really astonishing to imagine how immensely strong she must grow in time; and then, when she could carry a dosser up two pair of stairs, enough to break the back of a

miller, or a miller's horse, how she would be able to go up stairs, or up a mountain, or up anywhere without the weight!

Mrs. Parrymore used to reason on this, till she perfectly astounded herself and her hearers with the visions of more than Samsonean, Ajaxean, Polyphemean, Briarean, Titanic, or any other extraordinary strength, that Miss Theodosia was one day to realize.

Besides this, she lay on a mattrass as hard as deal-board, to make her straight, though she was by no means crooked by nature; and went lightly clothed in cold weather, to harden her, and make her bear any cold in any winter. "She might have done that," said Greatorex, "by the aid of good warm blankets at night, and warm woollen clothes and furs by day;" but that Mrs. Parrymore denounced as dreadfully effeminate. She declared that our ancestors, in this same country, used to lie in bogs in winter, and that we ought to be able to do so too.

Greatorex thought it would be a feat to make a bog-trotter of him; but as to being a bog-sleeper, he greatly preferred a feather bed, to all intents and purposes. And as to those ancient Britons, he was mistaken if he had not heard

the parson say that they used to look blue all over—and no wonder. But Mrs. Parrymore avowed scornfully that the farmer was a lost, effeminate man—he would never become the model of an Ancient Briton; and Greatorex bowed, and said he humbly hoped not—he had no taste that way.

So every day, Miss Theodosia Vining might be seen running her hour round the great garden, in her leaden-soled shoes, and every night mounting up stairs, with her dosser on her back, which grew continually scientifically heavier; and at the age of nineteen you might see the marvellous result: and marvellous it was—for, instead of a young giantess, or a young Atalanta, with wind-winged heels, or a young female Hercules, there you saw a young lady of middle stature, of a sensible and considerably handsome, but very pale face; and one who altogether gave you the idea of a very clever girl, on the sliding-scale of a consumption.

"Drat it," Farmer Greatorex began to say to Mrs. Parrymore, with an earnestness which had more serious interest than politeness in it "drat it, Madam, if you holden on, you'll run that poor thing into a galloping decline. Blame me, but you'll make her so strong, that

she'll mount up to heaven; and so nimble, that she'll leap into th' t'other world. Good gracious! but my heart aches for her—poor, dear, sensible thing, as it is!

"Come now, Mrs. Parrymore, be advised by me: drop these Frenchicfied notions, and take to Natur before it's too late. Look at my lasses: there's health and strength for you! They've niver run in leaden shoes, nor carried sand-hampers, like so many Jinny-asses, to bed wi' 'em; but if you'll find any finer, healthier, strappinger lasses in all th' country, why, I'll eat my hat!

"Come, dear Madam, let Miss Vining come to ar house, and do as they dun. Let her come and help to make cheese, and make butter, and drink new milk and warm whey of a summer morning. Or if that's too farmerly, let her help 'em to gather and shull th' peas i' th' garden, all among th' roses and lilies o' Sharon, and turn out a neat tart or a custard, and the like of that; and I'll engage she'll soon be as fresh and blooming as a May morning.

"Let her come and wash her face in May dew by four o'clock of a morning, as I see my lasses do slyly sometimes, to make themselves fair, though I niver let 'em know that I see 'em

out of my chamber window, or they'd not do it; and she'll do credit to you, Madam—she will, soon.

"Lord bless me, Madam! there's nothing like Natur! An hour of a fine morning, when th' dew's on th' grass, and th' larks are in th' sky—that's worth all your leaden shoes and your sand-hampers! That's a golden old saying, now:

"Early to bed, and early to rise,
Is the way to be healthy, wealthy, and wise.

"And if I were a poet, as I am not, I'd add some other rhymes to 'em, as—

"Early to bed, and early to rise,
That's the way to grow a good size;
With a skin like roses in warm Julys,
And breath like the violet when it sighs,
And hair like cloudlets in summer skies,
And the light of sunset in your eyes.
Early to pillow, and early to fold,
That's the way to have and to hold;
To keep the doctor from your gold,
And the sexton from putting you under the mould;
To live while you're young, and live till you're old;
To be pretty, and witty, and merry, and bold;
To laugh and sing, and seldom scold.
That's the way, and a very good way,
Let the wise in their own eyes say their say,

And the lazy and crazy do as they may—
Turn day into night, and night into day.
That's the way that will hold to the end,
Make your friend love you, and you love your friend,
And thank your God for whatever He'll send.

"That's old Greatorex's creed, rough and ready; and blame me! if I don't think it's worth getting the Parson to put it into some shape. But Lord bless me, Madam! my fillies, as never wear'n shoes at all till they are broken to work, go like wind; and when they are put in harness are as strong as any horses since the great Trojan horse, as th' Parson reads about; and they've niver carried sand-hampers, nor nothing o' th' sort. Natur, my dear Madam—Natur, that's the schoolmistress as cuts us all out, and will do to th' end of time."

Captain Parrymore, who was pretty often treated to a like harangue, as the farmer and he coursed together, confessed that he was quite of his mind; and a physician having soon after been called in to remove a certain shortness of breath, and a very suspicious little cough that exhibited themselves in Miss Theodosia, at once had the dosser and the leaden-soled shoes flung into the kitchen fire, and recommended the farmer's remedies. We shall see in a while

what came of it; but now we must wind up the present chapter by seeing how it went with Miss Russell.

Nothing could go better. Harriet Russell herself was bright and happy as the day was long. She taught the little orphans with all her soul, and they came to cling to her as to a second mother. Everywhere she diffused a sunshine and a gaiety, which seemed to flow from her heart as naturally as light from the heavens. Mr. Dorrington thought her one of the most sensible and charming young women he had ever seen. Mrs. Dorrington, in whose heart there had been a great void since the death of her dear Hetty Harrison, took Harriet Russell into it with a sort of mingled mother's love and friendship. She found in her the tastes, and the strong, high principles which were so peculiarly her own. The Vicar was charmed with her, and often went to enjoy a musical treat with her. He declared that she had a real genius for music, and must have had a first-rate education. The farmer and all his family were in raptures with her, for there, and everywhere amongst the villagers, she was as sweet and affable as if she belonged to them all. Even Captain Parrymore admired her; and Miss

Theodosia Vining, though her aunt still protested that she must be eccentric, and that there was some mystery about her, grew so attached to her, that she was continually stealing off to have a long talk with her in her cottage.

Miss Russell had made a happy event to herself, and others, out of what Mrs. Parrymore pronounced eccentric and incomprehensible. Her only sorrow was on account of her mother, from whom she was cut off by her miserable marriage, and who was, and must remain, the victim of that terrible Francis Topham. From the persecutions of this man Miss Russell herself was for ever freed. His illegal practices had driven him for safety abroad: he could never return to this country. All fear for herself had vanished; she only feared and mourned for her unhappy parent.

CHAPTER VI.

On the way from Rome to Naples, an English family was stopped betwixt Terracina and Fondi, by robbers. It was in the broad day of a fine May afternoon. Two or three grim, bearded, and broad-hatted fellows presented themselves in a narrow gorge betwixt two thickly-wooded hills, with fire-arms in their hands. They issued quickly from the trees which clothed the slopes to the very edge of the road, where it descended rapidly into the plain, and placing themselves before the carriage, cried "Halt!" The postillion stopped instantly. There was a loud shrieking of ladies in the carriage, and the next instant the carriage-doors

on each side were opened, and the travellers were bade to descend at their best speed. There was no refusing compliance to such hairy faces and wild figures, with rifle in hand, and dagger and pistols in their belts. The next moment an elderly gentleman and two ladies stood in the road, and saw the cushions of their carriage-seats flung into the road, and the robbers drag forth box and bag and basket, diving into every corner and pocket, and in the next instant cutting the straps of trunks, and demanding the keys, opening them and the imperial, and flinging unceremoniously their contents to two other comrades on the ground. In a few seconds the scene of confusion amongst clothes, trinkets, and papers on the road-sides, and in the arms of great fellows, who were conveying them away into the shadow of the trees, was astonishing.

The terrified looks of the travellers—the paralyzed air of the servants—and the passive quiet of the Italian driver—as if it were a thing that he was pretty well used to, would have made a very fine picture, but he who sketched it must have been quick, for the adroitness with which the bandits cleared away things was wonderful. Scarcely had the travellers time to

lament inwardly over their travelling apparel and other comforts, which had vanished into the woods, when they were themselves called upon to produce their money, and whatever else they had of value on their persons. The ladies were pulling out their purses in great trepidation, and therefore finding great difficulty in disentangling them from their clothes, and the old gentleman, trembling so violently that he was scarcely able to hold it, was handing over a considerable pocket-book of fine Russian leather, when two other fellows, young and active, sprang from the wood on the opposite side of the road to that whence the former ones had issued.

"More of them!" cried the gentleman, with looks of terror and despair at his companions. "God help us!"—when crack!—crack!—went the pistols of those last arrived, and the travellers shrieked aloud, believing themselves shot, but to their astonishment, instead of that, seeing two of their captors plunge headlong into the dust.

"On!—on!" shouted one of the strangers—"give them no time!"—himself rushing over the road and into the wood, where the two booty-laden thieves had disappeared, while his companion in equally admirable English— turn-

ing his head as he ran past the carriage, said in rapid accents: "Prepare to mount and away—not a moment is to lose!" With a couple of words in Italian to the driver, he disappeared after his companion amongst the trees. A tall English servant, who had been sitting on the box with the driver, appeared to be seized with a frenzy at the sight of the young man who had thus unexpectedly appeared and again disappeared after the others, snatched up from somewhere about his seat a brace of pistols, and springing from the carriage, dashed after them. "John! John!" shouted the old gentleman in terror, but his words were lost on the man, who rushed headlong into the wood. In the next instant there was a sharp exchange of fire-arms, loud shouts, and again a discharge; when forth from the thick olive-trees which lined the way came the servant and the two strangers, bearing in their arms the things which the thieves had carried off, and flinging them into the body of the carriage, and tossing others wildly up to the roof, they cried to the driver to cut away for his life. One of the strangers mounted upon the box between the driver and the servant, the other took his station on the step of the

carriage, and thus they descended the hill at a rapid rate.

Under the hill stood a vetturino with his carriage, into which the young man who had just kept his standing on the step of the English carriage sprung with admirable celerity; and away drove the two carriages towards Fondi, never pausing till they reached that city.

The surprise and also intermingled terror, confusion, and joy of the English family may be imagined. The sudden and unexpected attack —for the road was reported safe in Albano, and as having been for a long time free from depredations—the sudden rescue, and the hurry with which they had flown along, continually fearful of some fresh pursuit, had but little subsided as they reached the inn in Fondi. There was a great bustle in re-adjusting all the articles which had been so rudely snatched by the robbers from the places in which they were so neatly packed, and again as abruptly flung back again into and on to the carriage. Very few things of value were found to be missing, though all were wofully rumpled and disarranged. Meantime the two young English-

men, for such they proved, who had thus luckily come to their assistance, had hurried off to the authorities to announce to them what had taken place. This done, they returned, and were overwhelmed by expressions of gratitude by the family whom they had so intrepidly rescued. It was found that they were travelling the same road, and it was agreed that after a hasty refreshment they should set out, and if possible reach Mola di Gaeta that night. The old gentleman was so alarmed that he had ordered a number of outriders to accompany them to Itri, and seemed to felicitate himself, and take great comfort from having the company of these two courageous young countrymen.

They made a rapid journey, and it was not till they were safely housed in Mola di Gaeta, that they seemed to recover their entire composure. On reaching that place, the ladies retired at once to their rooms, worn out by the terrors and excitement of the day; and the old gentleman prepared to follow their example, the two active young Englishmen, on the contrary, setting out for a moonlight stroll amid the striking scenery of the place. They longed to breathe the cool night air of the orange-gardens, to catch the breeze from the blue Mediterranean,

and the distant smoking top of Vesuvius. But in the morning at an early breakfast, all seemed to have regained their tranquillity; they were refreshed by their night's rest and the adventure of the day before had assumed a more definite and settled shape in their minds.

Strange as it may seem, it was only now that the two parties which had thus so strangely met, came to full mutual explanations, and a knowledge of who each other were. The gentleman who had mounted into a very crowded seat on the box of the English carriage, between the driver and the servant, and had kept guard as it were, till they reached Mola, holding his pistols in readiness in his hands, had learned that the family's name was Arden; but he had not then further pressed his inquiries, for the affair of the instant, and the necessity of pushing on, of keeping strict watch, and the discussion of all that related to the attack and rescue, absorbed all the enthusiasm and anxiety of every one. On the other hand, the Ardens, in their agitation and hurry, even while thanking their deliverers, with their utmost fervency of expression, had not thought of inquiring their names.

But now they met, eager on both sides to know more of each other. The two young travellers,

on entering the breakfast-room, were met by the Ardens with the most simultaneous and cordial salutations. The young men, having now time to use their eyes, saw before them Mr. Arden, a gentleman of apparently nearly seventy, of middle size and aristocratic appearance; a tall lady of more than fifty; and a young one, of a peculiarly fascinating aspect. They learned that these were the sister and the daughter of Mr. Arden. On the other hand, when the Ardens begged to know the names of their new friends, they were informed that they were a Mr. Bathurst and Mr. Vincent Dorrington.

Yes! they were actually our young friends, who, on their return from their adventurous years of Eastern travel, were making their way to Naples, thence to embark for Marseilles, and thence by a rapid journey home.

"Mr. Dorrington!" exclaimed both the ladies in one breath, and with looks of astonishment and curiosity, "can it be a Mr. Dorrington of Westwood?"

"The same," said Vincent; "and strange as was our encounter yesterday, I fancy the strangeness will be wonderfully increased by finding that old and very near neighbours have thus curiously met under such curious circumstances

in a foreign land. You mention Westwood; and I have just learned from your servant, that you are yourselves from Arden Lodge, but a mile from that, my native place."

"That is true," said the whole family. "But how wonderful, how very wonderful, when having lived so many years near each other, we never met before. Welcome, Mr. Dorrington, a thousand welcomes to our hearts and homes whether here or in England. From this time forward we certainly shall be good friends."

Mr. Bathurst was also soon known to them, for many of his relatives and friends were amongst their familiar acquaintances. All sate down to breakfast in a mood of gladness and mutual congratulation that may be readily imagined. Mr. Arden inquired how they came to perceive the attack upon them, and how they dared to attack the robbers?

"We had but just passed over the ground ourselves," said the young men. "We perceived nothing. All was still; no doubt they did not think us worth meddling with when so much richer a booty was at hand, and of which there is a little doubt they had received timely intelligence from Terracina by their scouts. But on descending the hill we heard shrieks,

and a clamour of stern, gruff voices. We have had experience enough during these last two years to tell us at once the meaning of it. We stopped our carriage; buried ourselves in the thick olive-trees, and made the best of our way to reconnoitre the force of the bandits. We soon satisfied ourselves that they were not a very numerous party, and we relied on the confounding effect of a sudden and impetuous onset to put the fellows to flight. It succeeded. The fall of their comrades, and the fierceness of our pursuit, struck them with a panic. The men carrying off the luggage let the things fall, and sprang behind the boles of trees to protect themselves. A couple more, posted in the wood, discharged their firearms at us, but we returned their salute with such promptness that they took to flight, and we did not give them time to rally, before we were off the ground."

All joined in applauding the gallantry of the action, and the masterly style in which the assault had been executed.

"But," said Mr. Arden, "how daring! was it not even somewhat rash? Suppose the robbers had been of overwhelming force? Why, they would have killed us all together!"

"Then, possibly," said the young men, "we might not have ventured to assail them, though our fingers would have itched to have had at them. But we soon saw that there were no great number; not more than half a dozen or so."

"Half a dozen!" exclaimed Mr. Arden, "and you two only?"

"Yes, Sir," said the young men, "but you forget that there were three men in your party; and we had each a brace of double-barrelled pistols."

"A brave! a daring action!" said Mr. Arden.

"Oh! a most gallant action!" exclaimed both the ladies.

"You have saved all our lives," said Mr. Arden.

"Oh no!" said one of the young men, laughing, "only your purses, and the contents of your trunks. Possibly they might have carried you off for a few days or weeks into the Abruzzi, and detained you in the defiles of Monte Nivoso, till your ransoms were received; but that would have been all."

"All!" said Mr. Arden, with an air of consternation. "All! and enough too! What

more dreadful could one imagine, except death itself, than being in the power of such monsters in their mountain strongholds?"

"Horrible! horrible!" said the ladies; "it makes one tremble to think of."

"You have been travelling a good while?" said the elder lady.

The young men gave them an outline of their wanderings, which, as they became expanded in all their extent before the minds of the hearers, filled them with the greatest astonishment.

"Why," said Mr. Arden, "you are travellers, indeed! You are none of our mere summer tourists. You have made your travels on an extraordinary scale. There can be few men living who have gone over so much ground and penetrated into such places. Now, indeed, I cease to wonder at your doings yesterday. You are used to such things."

The ladies gazed with eyes of intensest wonder and interest on their new friends. They asked a multitude of questions about the people amongst whom they had sojourned, and congratulated themselves on having fallen in with such accomplished and enterprising men. It was agreed that all should travel on to Naples together. After a merry breakfast, during which

the time had flown miraculously, in a world of talk, the carriages were at the door, and they proceeded on their way. As the young men had considerable luggage, they took their vetturino though; but one of them often occupied the vacant corner in the carriage of the Ardens, and as it was a capacious one, often both of them were there, and the hours flew very delightfully. The circumstances which had brought them together, seemed to make them all at once tolerably acquainted, and the knowledge of each other's connections furnished a number of topics which continually made them more so.

In Naples, they remained at the same inn, and very much together for a week, the time to which the two young friends had restricted themselves before embarking. Together they visited the various beauties of that beautiful neighbourhood; ascended together Vesuvius, explored the remains of Herculaneum and Pompeii; all the delicious shores and vine-clad hills of Castellamare, Amalfi, the delightful island of Capri, made an excursion to Salerno and the temples of Paestum; lingered in the grotto of Posilippo, and along the margin of the ever-lovely bay.

It was a week that flew away as in a dream

of Paradise; but it was gone—and the friends prepared, though reluctantly, to depart.

"But cannot you really stay a little longer?" said the Ardens, with a feeling of regret too genuine to be mistaken. "We do so really enjoy your company—you have made the stay here so infinitely more charming than it would have been. Can you not really stay, and make the journey home with us? We shall not be many weeks: and what is that in your years of travel?"

"That," said Mr. Bathurst, "is precisely the reason why I cannot stay. The years have swallowed the weeks. Go I must; but perhaps Vincent can stay—I think he might; I would have him do so."

"You would!" said they: "then Mr. Dorrington must—he will! He will not deny us that pleasure. Oh! what a favour you will do us, Mr. Dorrington, to have your company and safeguard through France. You will not deny us—it must be so."

Vincent protested that it was impossible—he had already exceeded his time—his father and mother were impatient for his return.

"Oh!" said Miss Nelly Arden, the aunt and sister, "we will settle all that. Mrs. Dorrington

is so good a creature, as all the world knows, that I will undertake to appease any dissatisfaction of hers."

"And I of Mr. Dorrington," said Mr. Arden.

"There! you must stay," said a sweet face and lovely and loving pair of eyes—those of the youthful Elizabeth Angela Arden. "You cannot refuse us all—you cannot refuse papa."

Vincent shook his head, but Bathurst said:

"Oh! he'll stay—of course he will; in fact, I won't take him with me. I don't think I will allow him to go in the same ship."

There was a general laughter; and Mr. Arden, taking Vincent's arm, said:

"Come, let us have a walk, my young friend, into the garden here. I want to say a word to you."

Mr. Bathurst nodded, smiling to the ladies: "It will be all right;" and proceeded to pack his luggage.

Mr. Arden, meanwhile, walked with Vincent in the garden, and told him that he should feel it a very great obligation if he could make it convenient to remain, and accompany them home.

"I feel," he said, "how much you and your

excellent friend, Mr. Bathurst, have increased our pleasure in this journey. What a knowledge and a security we possess in you! If you both leave us, we shall be quite melancholy. As you know, we have lost my brother, who was so much to us. You are an old neighbour —we feel at home with you; besides that, we can depend so much on your information and your talent. If you could make this short stay with us, you would lay us under a greater obligation than I can well express."

What did Vincent say? He consented to remain. The eloquence of Mr. Arden had prevailed, backed by an eloquence yet more persuasive—of that anon.

To-day, the friends took one farewell drive altogether through the streets and the vineyards of Naples; to-morrow, they accompanied Mr. Bathurst on board his ship. There was a cordial and an affectionate farewell.

"Welcome to London," said Mr. Bathurst, as he leaned over the ship's side, to his friends in their boat; and they were again in Naples, and he sailing over the sunny and breeze Mediterranean, full of thoughts of home, and of those he had here left for a time behind.

CHAPTER VII.

The cordiality with which the two young Englishmen had been received by the Ardens, in consequence of their prompt and magnanimous aid, had made them feel peculiarly at home with them. Mr. Bathurst, whose gay and open-hearted disposition was extremely enlivening to their circle, agreed very much in political views with Mr. Arden, more so than he did with his friend Vincent, though those views had greatly expanded and liberalized themselves in the progress of their travel. In taste for information, for art, and especially for painting and music, he agreed both with his friend Vincent and with the ladies of the Arden family. Vin-

cent himself and the ladies found a grand link of union and sympathy in their knowledge of their common home neighbourhood, and in attachment to it.

Vincent had rambled through every corner of the Arden woods in his boyhood, and angled for whole summers in the little river Wilder, which bounded the Arden property. They were continually referring to and admiring the various points of scenery; and it seemed strange that they should all be so intimate with the same things and places, and yet never have seen one another. But Mr. Dorrington's reluctance to much intercourse with his aristocratic neighbours was well known, and Vincent explained that his strolls, or, as he laughingly called them, his trespasses on the Arden woods and lands occurred precisely at those seasons of the year, when the family was away. At such a period, curiosity even had led him, with Jeremiah Gould, to visit the house, and see its paintings. He could thus tell them the characters of their own rooms, and of their principal pictures. They were very merry over these conversations, and the ladies said:

"Well, you must become better acquainted with our house on our return. We shall claim

you positively for the intimate friend of the family."

To this Vincent could feel no objection. From the moment, indeed, that he had seen and conversed with the two Miss Ardens—aunt and niece—he seemed to be an old acquaintance. There was a familiarity of feeling produced by the perfect agreement of tastes and ideas. He seemed not to have to learn their characters, but to see them fully and clearly. As we say on such occasions—and who has not in his life experienced them?—he was at once at home with them. Every day had only strengthened this feeling. They stood transparent, and in the completest sympathy before him. They conversed without the slightest disguise or distance: there was a cordial confidence and reliance in their mutual manners. They compared tastes, and marvelled at their entire accordance. In a very few days Vincent might have been a son and brother of the house.

Miss Nelly Arden, as she was called, and which was her real name, was one of those tall women that are so frequently met with amongst our aristocracy. She must have been a very striking woman in her youth; and having been engaged to a young officer who had fallen in the

wars, she thenceforward had refused every offer of marriage, and though she kept her own home, for she was of a most independent disposition, had always been a part, as it were, of her brother's family. She was most tenderly attached to Mrs. Arden, who died when her daughter Elizabeth was quite a girl. Since then she had, as her deceased friend had entreated of her, and as her lips and heart had most truly promised, been as a second mother to her, and had infused into her all her own tastes and feelings, which, in fact, were very much those of the child's departed mother.

Miss Nelly was, as we have said, tall, almost very tall; of a good, somewhat slender figure, and a corresponding countenance; features well defined; a rather prominent nose, fresh complexion, light blue eyes, and light brown hair, which time had yet wonderfully spared. Seen anywhere, you would have said: "This is an English gentlewoman." To a stranger, Miss Nelly Arden would, from her bearing and look, have passed for a very proud woman; but as soon as you knew her, this air of aristocratic height gave way to a perception of the warmth and frankness of her feelings. With an excel-

lent heart, with the most genuine of natures, the most noble and liberal ideas, she was—and that was her grand infirmity—too quick and hasty in her judgments. She was apt to catch up your last ideas before you had well uttered your first. Her horses, as her brother constantly said, were always running away with her. She jumped to conclusions; she ran away with the strangest notions, her friends said; but the fact was, that the strangest notions ran away, or rather flew away, with her. She was like a slippery arrow, or a gun that had too facile a lock: often when you were only thinking of aiming at something, you were startled by finding her off and gone to a conclusion that you never dreamed of, and which it was not easy always to bring her back from.

This was especially the case when she had a suspicion that there was an intent to do or say something to which she had a strong repugnance. In a moment her feelings were too much like electric wires—just touched, and their vibrations were the next moment on the other side of the kingdom. No experience seemed to correct this failing. Often as she had seen the mischievous effects of it, and ready as she was

to confess and make all possible amends when once seen, she still remained as quick, impulsive, and as apt to run off at a tangent as ever. Nevertheless, there was not a more generous or constant woman living. She had her strong prejudices and lasting resentments, but they were only where she believed, after long observation, that there were crime and baseness. With those whom she knew to be true and upright natures she might differ, but she still was kind, constant, and affectionate.

Her niece whom she had educated, yet differed materially from herself. With all her warmth and generosity, there was in her a greater self-possession—a cooler and more self-poised judgment. Elizabeth Angela Arden was not yet twenty-one. Beside her aunt she did not appear tall, away from her she was found to be above the middle height. Of a form and face exquisitely beautiful, there was yet a frankness of character that at once won your regard, and a cheerful and even merry disposition, which became in intimate intercourse very charming. It was soon seen that she had great strength and independence of spirit, yet with a tenderness that was as soft and delicate as the dew on

the summer morning grass. Her dark hair and eyes, shaded with the richest and most jetty lashes, contrasted beautifully with the fairness and freshness of her complexion. But it was the expression in her eyes, and about her mouth, that gave the real character to her face. There lay in them a deep sentiment, an unspeakable sweetness and amiability, evidently under the guidance of great sense and thought, which at once fell like a heavenly sunshine on the mind of a kindred nature.

From the first moment that Vincent Dorrington saw her, he felt that she was a woman that he could love to the whole extent of his soul's affections. He knew that she was a great heiress, and the knowledge of that changed what would have been instant passion into a romantic admiration. What would he not have given to have found her without that brilliant and fatal appendage? Yet, nevertheless, as they came to converse, it was impossible not to give way to the charm of her society. He was brought by the cordial manner of the whole family, but especially of Miss Arden and her aunt, into a dangerous circle of enchantment, in which there was a peril of forgetting the real distance which fortune had

placed, if not between them, yet at least between Miss Arden and Vincent Dorrington's nice sense of honour, and his contempt of anything like a mercenary ambition.

But the manner of Miss Arden towards Vincent was so frank and cordial, that it was evident to every one that she was as much pleased with him, as he could possibly be with her. After the first few days, when a maidenly delicacy of manner mingled in their new acquaintance with her admiration of his gallant interference in their behalf, there was an unaffected kindness and sincerity of pleasure in her daily conversations with him, which would have led a stranger to suppose them brother and sister. Indeed, both she and her aunt admitted him at once to so much of their obvious regard, that perhaps Mr. Arden might think it quite safe and proper to let him know that his daughter was already engaged.

"I am very glad," said he, "to have made your acquaintance, and especially as I may hope for a long enjoyment of it, as you are so near a neighbour. You may be of much use to Elizabeth in those accomplishments, which it is desirable she should possess in the highest per-

fection, as she will hereafter have to take a high place in society. I may tell you that she is engaged to a very worthy young nobleman, Lord Chellaston, the eldest son of the Earl of Elvaston. Her music, her Italian, and German, are things which she is now particularly cultivating, by the very highest professional assistance, and I perceive you are quite a master in these matters; besides that, your great knowledge of the world and of many countries, will enable you to give her a variety of valuable information. At Arden Lodge you will always find yourself at home; and when Elizabeth is gone, which I expect will not be very long first, you will be doubly acceptable to me, as I shall naturally so much miss her."

Here was a second bar to any danger of permitting Miss Arden's charms to make too deep an impression on his imagination, thought Vincent, and all the more securely he gave himself up to enjoy her society as a friend. And when any one looked on the manly and thoughtful face of Vincent Dorrington, they could not be surprised that he awoke a very warm interest in the minds of his new friends.

That handsome, and yet very intelligent face, his dark blue, and penetrating eyes, earnest and

serious, commonly, but yet frequently kindling up with the most genial and social mirth, his ample and well-developed forehead, shaded by the blackest of plentiful hair, and his well-grown and graceful figure, marked him at once as no common man. There was a massy build of head, and an amiable and yet intellectual look about him, that corresponded to the extent of his acquirements, and the vast fields over which he had carried his study of man. You felt that you were in the company of a man, when you gazed on him, in whom you had a mind of ample range, unusually enriched by study and opportunity, and yet divested of all egotism and hauteur. He was familiar, frank, and kindly; ready for a ride into the open air, or an excursion into the land of poetry and art.

Before Mr. Bathurst left, he had made up his mind on one point.

"My dear Vincent," he said, "you are a lucky fellow. You have found the woman cut out for you by Nature's own hand. Miss Arden was created for you, and you for her."

"Miss Arden!" said Vincent, "would to Heaven it were so; but, my dear Charles, she is created for Lord Chellaston."

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed Mr. Bathurst, "nothing of the kind, she is made for you, and for no one else. I see it clear as I see that fire-tree of Vesuvius. I see it in her eyes. I hear it in her voice when she speaks to you. I feel it in everything about her. She is yours! she loves you, loved you from the moment she saw you: will love you, and no one else till the day of her death. Not all the lords in England weigh one straw in comparison with her idea of you. I am not mad, Vincent; I am no fool, I hope, either. I have watched her, watched you both; you love one another at this moment, beyond the power of all earth to tear you asunder. It will never be done. It is your fate, and it will be so, spite of everything."

"My dear Charles," said Vincent, "you astonish me. I wish you could convince fate, or Miss Arden, and still more so, her father of what you say; but it strikes me that Mr. Arden is a man most thoroughly conventional. His mind is not large or original. He has adopted all the creed of his class. He prides himself on his property, his standing, and his importance as an English gentleman. He has given his promise to Lord Chellaston, and I believe were I so dis-

posed as you may imagine, that the very acquisition of Miss Arden's affections would only be the prelude to the most distressing and peace-destroying scenes. Besides you have never seen Lord Chellaston."

"But I have," said Mr. Bathurst, quickly; "and he is not the man for Miss Arden. There is but one man for her, and that man she loves, and with a feeling that has its roots deep as her life. My dear Vincent, I have talked with Miss Arden; I have seen down a good way into her transparent, and I may say very noble, nature: there is a strength there that could resist like the granite whole oceans of opposition to her sense of right, but a tenderness that melts at the touch of genuine pathos instantly. Miss Arden cannot be the chattel, however glittering, of a husband; she must have a heart and mind like her own. She is not insensible to the advantages she possesses, but all that she possesses is as nothing to the devotion of her soul to the man whom she believes worthy of her love. We have talked of you, Vincent, and though not a word escaped her, which in itself could betray her feeling, the feeling with which she listened to your praises and merits, as I was bound conscientiously to

describe them, was too obvious to the eye of a friend like me to be mistaken. You must love her, Vincent, ay, as never woman was loved; or you will do the most foolish, the most cruel, and the most wicked thing that you can possibly perpetrate in the course of your existence. If you value her happiness, you must resolve to dread no storms, shun no troubles, and care for no imputations, being honest and honourable in yourself. You must do this for her sake: and how easy! With such a woman at my side, I would defy the devil and all his angels."

It was this enthusiastic and very characteristic declaration of Mr. Bathurst's which determined Vincent to stay behind. The assurance that Lord Chellaston was not a man that Miss Arden could love, gave a new turn to Vincent's ideas. He felt a new interest in Miss Arden. He was anxious to learn what her real feelings were in the case, and hoped that time would open it up to him. Whether what Bathurst had said of Miss Arden's regard for him had any truth in it, was too interesting to him not to inspire him with every endeavour to ascertain. Certainly, nothing could exceed the kind and frank manner which both she and her

aunt had throughout maintained towards him. When Mr. Bathurst was gone, the family drove out all together daily: often he and Elizabeth rode into the country, and along the shore. They practised music together, and Vincent taught her many songs of the various countries in which he had sojourned, translating them for her. He read German and Italian with her, and conversed constantly in those languages, in order to give her fluency and life knowledge of them. The party made long excursions together, visited the isles of Ischia and Procida, and the ancient Baia—the scenery made immortal by Virgil—the lake of Avernus, and the cave of the Cumæan Sybil.

To Mr. Arden, Vincent seemed to become indispensable. He was his secretary, writing his letters for him, and thus admitted to a knowledge of many of his private affairs in England. The old gentleman consulted him in all his movements, and seemed to rely on his judgment with the most profound confidence. Yet the settled manner in which he always spoke of his daughter's approaching marriage with Lord Chellaston, grated strangely on Vincent's feelings. Was it true that Miss Arden did not

love him, and yet looked forward, to all appearance, so calmly to their union? It was so opposed to everything that he conceived of in her nature, that it was a torturing mystery to him which he longed to have cleared up, and yet did not feel warranted in touching on such a topic. Miss Arden was not likely to speak of it to him, and Miss Nelly said nothing. Towards him both continued most invariably kind, treating him with all the free affection of a relative and a dear friend.

This uncertainty began to press painfully and more painfully on his mind. It was strange, he thought, that Miss Nelly Arden never once alluded to a fact which must be constantly in her thoughts if she loved her niece, and knew that she was decidedly averse to the connection. Was his friend Bathurst deceived in his conjectures? and had all parties agreed to adopt the arrangement as a splendid necessity? But how then could Elizabeth Arden appear so joyous and even happy as she did? Yet no one could seem to enjoy life with a lighter or a more life-enjoying heart. As if he had been her brother she was going onward with him from day to day amid their books, their music, or their excursions,

with an all radiant aspect, with every appearance of heartfelt pleasure. Together they frequented the operas, the concerts, and other places and parties of pleasure, and no shade of sadness on her brow betrayed the secret of a heavy heart.

It was to Vincent a mystery that he could not fathom, and he grew restless, feverish, and silent. He felt that he was making a bitter life for himself, if Miss Arden were contemplating a union with Lord Chellaston. Were such the case, he might appear, did he avow his real sentiments, to be seeking only Elizabeth Arden's fortune, and availing himself of this admission to the intimacy of the family to induce her to break the alliance, which he had heard from her own father was a settled affair. There was but one way to avoid this danger, and that was to hasten from this perilous proximity to the object of his affection, to return home. But what then was he to allege as a reason for quitting his friends, when he had agreed to remain with them during their stay? He was in a painful dilemma. His change of mood did not escape their attention.

"You are not well, Mr. Dorrington," said Nelly Arden: "perhaps it is the heat here;

but then you are used to all climates. What can it be?"

"Nothing," said Vincent. "I am very well."

"Oh, Vincent begins to be home-sick," said Mr. Arden. "Well, we shall not now stay much longer. Cheer up, my friend; you can surely hold out a few weeks, when you have done it so many years."

"Perhaps, Mr. Dorrington, you have heard bad news from home?" said Elizabeth, with an expression of real feeling.

"Oh no," replied Vincent, "by no means. I am very well, and have no bad news; but we cannot be always alike. It will be all right again, no doubt, ere long."

That day Elizabeth Arden and himself rode out alone. They had often dispensed with the attendance of a groom, Elizabeth saying, that with Mr. Dorrington she felt quite secure, and wanted no assistance but what he could readily give her. They took the way along the foot of Vesuvius, and ascended to some distance amongst the vineyards, and to an elevation that commanded a view of the whole noble bay. Vincent was silent at setting out, but finding

that his mood seemed to infect Elizabeth, and that she rode on, too, silent and thoughtfully, he endeavoured to talk, and to display his usual cheerfulness. Elizabeth smiled, but it was accompanied by an expression that went to his heart. It was a sad affectionate look that seemed to say: "But you are not happy. You only seek to make me think so."

They went onward and upward, along a stony and narrow path, where only one horse could go at once. As they reached an open space at the turn of the road, Elizabeth stopped her horse, and as Vincent came up alongside of her, she said with a tone of deep feeling:

"Mr. Dorrington, you are not happy. You must tell me the cause. I cannot bear to see you as you are: you make me very unhappy too. Do you want to leave us? Is that it?"

Vincent was taken by surprise,—he looked at her with a sad but piercing look. He felt that he ought now to speak out, and be candid.

"Dear Miss Arden," he said, "I will not say that I am happy. You say, do I wish to leave you? I do not wish it; but I think I ought to leave you."

"But why ought you? We are not tired of you: are you tired of us?"

There was a tremor in her voice as she spoke that went through Vincent's soul like a pang, and yet it was a delicious one. There was a sad, grave expression in his face that spoke of deep inward feeling.

"Tired of you, dearest Elizabeth!" said Vincent: "never to all eternity could such a feeling reach me. No! I am but too happy in your company. No! God knows I had rather live with you in yon vine-dresser's hut,"—pointing to one at some distance below them,—"with nothing but my daily gains, than with any other being in the proudest home of England. But, Elizabeth, I know well that you are another's, and not mine."

Before these words were well spoken, he felt a hand laid quickly on his, and saw a face gazing at his through tears that were those of happiness, and not of grief.

"Ah! my Vincent!" said Miss Arden; "what a cruel thought has been torturing you, and all the while I myself so happy. But Lord Chellaston!—you mean him! No, never, dearest Vincent,—never!—never! As I now know, as surely as I have long believed, that

you loved me —never shall my hand be given to any one but you. Never shall it rest as a wife's, but where it rests now. Oh! now all uncertainty will be done away with, and we shall again be so happy."

"Ah, my beloved Elizabeth! happy, indeed!" said Vincent, gazing on her in rapture; "but still, Elizabeth, this Lord Chellaston: how stands this? Your father has told me so often that all is settled—that you are affianced to him—that he has given his solemn promise to Lord Chellaston. He thinks and speaks of it with such certainty—such pleasure."

"I will tell you all, dear Vincent—everything—but to-day I cannot. Only of this be assured, I have never loved him, never could love him, and never will marry him! How my father and I shall settle it," said she, smiling through her tears, and assuming a look of her usual gaiety and happiness, "time will show, but to-day I will not think of it. Let us descend and have a gallop on the shore, for I feel too much excited to remain at rest. I must have motion! air! and you flying by my side."

She gave her horse the whip, they descended the steep and stony road, as if it had been

the smoothest path in the world, and were presently galloping along the margin of the sea full of life and love, two of the noblest-looking, and certainly the happiest beings that breathed in beautiful Italy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT day at dinner, there was a silence as great as there had been at breakfast, but it was from very different causes. Vincent was silent because he dared not trust his feelings. He was in a state of beatific exaltation, in the seventh heaven of felicity, and desired nothing but to sit and look at her who had long seemed to him the perfection of womanhood, and whom now he could inly call his own. Elizabeth sate the picture of loveliness and happiness. The excitement of the morning, the gladness of a deep and now assured love, gave an expression to every feature, like the sentiment of some glorious statue, but with the softest bloom of life, and in

her eyes beamed the serene and tender light of a heart which had nothing more to ask of Heaven. Nelly Arden was silent, but full of quiet smiles, and in a particularly active mood to help everybody to what they did not seem to want.

"Well," said Mr. Arden, looking round, "a most extremely entertaining company we are to-day. Commend me to this family when I have need of perfect quiet. Why, Mr. Dorrington, what can be the matter with you? You used to be a bit of as good company as one could desire, but now—what really can be the matter with you? Shall we send for a doctor, and yet one would not say you looked ill?"

"Oh! thank you, Sir," said Vincent, reddening a good deal, and his flush seemed to throw itself considerably on the face of Elizabeth, who sate opposite. "I am quite well, quite well, indeed. I have been rather out of sorts, I confess, but my ride has done me amazing good this morning, I never felt better in my life."

"I am heartily glad to hear it," said Mr. Arden, "but Nelly and Elizabeth, what ails you? Surely Vincent must have infected you."

"Perhaps he has," said Nelly Arden; "but

nevertheless, I feel wonderfully well. Like Mr. Vincent, I never felt better in my life."

"Nor I either," said Elizabeth, rising and giving her father a kiss, and smiling very brightly in his face. "My ride has done me immense good, immense! Oh! how sweet was the air from the sea!"

"Was it?" said Mr. Arden, "then I propose, Elizabeth, that you shall take a ride along the bay with me this evening. Nelly and Vincent can join us if they like, but I have a fancy for a trot to-day."

"With all my heart," said Elizabeth.

"And with all mine," said Nelly, "but with your leave I shall prefer the carriage, and I claim Mr. Dorrington to bear me company."

"Well, as you will," said Mr. Arden, "and so now as you have found your tongues again, let us talk."

And truly there was no lack of talking for the rest of the dinner-time.

In the evening, the two equestrians set out, and soon after Miss Nelly and Vincent drove quietly through the gay and swarming Toledo, and took their way towards Torro del Greco, Annunciata, and some distance on the road to Nocera.

Here Nelly Arden said they would have a walk up to some rocky vineyards which they saw above them. They quitted the carriage, and pursuing a narrow, winding path, overhung with vines that stretched from tree to tree, they came to the edge of a steep chestnut wood, where the grass was already burnt to a tawney colour, and where a number of huge pieces of rock which had sometime fallen from the hills above, offered them a choice of seats, shaded from the setting sun, but open to the full view of the glassy sea, which burned in rose colour beneath the full western glory.

Here Nelly seated herself on a piece of crag, and taking Vincent's hand, said:

"God bless you, my dear Vincent, I know all. Oh! you have made me very happy. The dearest wish of my heart is now accomplished. I can now meet my dear friend and sister in heaven and say, 'God has blessed my efforts for your dear child. Have I not fulfilled my vow?'"

Vincent stammered out his expressions of thanks for her great kindness to him.

"Ah! you frightened me dreadfully when you talked of going away! I was afraid it was owing to something my brother had said:

and yet how highly he does esteem you! But I flattered myself that you and Elizabeth so well understood each other; you must have felt how sincerely we loved you."

"Your good opinion of me," said Vincent, "is most flattering—it is quite wonderful: but this Lord Chellaston, how is all this? Elizabeth has promised to tell me the whole, but in the meantime it puzzles and distresses me."

"That is the very thing I want to talk to you about," said Miss Nelly. "You must not make yourself uneasy on that score: Elizabeth never liked him—never could like him."

"But is she not engaged to him? So I understood from Mr. Arden."

"Nothing of the kind," replied Miss Arden; "Mr. Arden only wishes for it. From the moment that Lord Chellaston proposed, both Elizabeth and myself have protested against it. But Mr. Arden is greatly flattered by the prospect of seeing his daughter a countess. You must have observed that he is very conventional; and I am sorry to say, that my poor dear brother who is dead, Mr. George Arden, the Rector of Dalling—Mr. Arden's parish—greatly strengthened him in this feeling. George

Arden, though a clergyman, was a man who had an immense value for property and title. He was an able, managing man. He, and Mr. Arden, his elder brother—my brother here—married two sisters, and he always managed Mr. Arden's estate. He was, in fact, his steward, though it was not publicly admitted, on account of his clerical character; but he really did manage everything. My brother here, has always liked to have some one to lean on, and George was his oracle. Whatever he did and said was right. And truly, in worldly wisdom, there were few men superior to my brother George. His living was good, but he added a very large farm to it, which he held of Mr. Arden. He managed to amass a great deal of money, which he invested in land in the adjoining parish. He built a large, handsome house in Dalling, where he lived many years before he died, leaving the Rectory to his Curate, Mr. Dewey, now the Rector. My sister Mrs. George is wealthy, and has but one son for it—Charles.

"Well, my brother George highly approved of the match with Lord Chellaston, and poohpoohed all my objections; but it rejoiced me

that Elizabeth was herself as determined against him as I was. He is not a dissipated man, Lord Chellaston, and he is a very good-looking man. As to his estate and title, these are perfectly unexceptionable; but then these are not what will make a woman like my Elizabeth happy. Elizabeth is her dear mother's own child: she is herself reproduced in person, mind, and character. Her mother knew the advantages of wealth, and she enjoyed and employed those advantages. But domestic life was her passion, and she had a terror of the mere life of rivalry in aristocratic splendour which too much infects society. That ever striving and striving for higher and higher rank, which can bring no solid enjoyment, she used to say was an insanity —a sad and melancholy insanity; and she prayed me to guard her child from that fatal infatuation as I would guard her from plague or death; to educate her so that she should come herself to loathe it; to fill and expand her mind with that knowledge and those religious feelings which should give her the purest and the noblest sources of enjoyment; to make of her a sensible and good woman, conscious of the solemn duties of life, and not a gilded puppet of fashion, with

a heart of wood; above all things, if I lived to befriend her in the critical age when her fine fortune would draw round her suitors, to choose for her not a worldly man, nor a man whose superb title and estate would swallow hers in insignificance, and reduce her child to the mere appendage of a great man's establishment. Her estate, she said, is enough for any woman, and I would see my daughter united to a good and sensible man, with whom she can enjoy it, and employ it as becomes an English gentlewoman of the true and only happy kind. My dear Mr. Dorrington, when my Elizabeth first saw you, she said to me, 'Aunt, that is the man that I could love. I am sure he is the very man whom my dear mother would have approved.' My heart, my dear friend, said Amen! to it. My eyes told me that you must be a good as well as an intellectual man; my heart said, the son of Mrs. Dorrington must be good and noble."

"You are much too good to me," said Vincent, in deep emotion; "God grant I may prove deserving of such kind opinions."

"I don't want to flatter you, my dear friend," continued Miss Nelly Arden; "my lips only say

what my conduct must have said ever since we have met. And now, God be praised, we understand one another; but as to my Lord Chellaston, Elizabeth never gave him the slightest encouragement. As if her very mother were speaking once more, she said to me: 'What do I want with title and estate? I have enough; and I am prouder of being mistress of Arden than I should be of being Countess of Elvaston. My dear aunt, I should only be the lady of his establishment, the occupier of his carriage: his affections are in his stables and his kennels, and I have no notion of being dragged, like a female captive of old, at the girths of Lord Chellaston's horse.'

"It was in vain that her father stormed and scolded, in vain that my brother George coaxed and persuaded, and represented to her the honour she would achieve, the splendour of her life in the great world, the homage which her rank and her beauty would surround her with. Elizabeth stood firm to her father, and laughed merrily with her uncle, saying the honour he promised her was like that promised to soldiers who were to win glory, which meant a hot march, and a cold grave in some foreign ditch.

"The only promise that could be obtained from Elizabeth, was that she would think of it, and see if she could find any reason to like Lord Chellaston, on condition that she should have a year's truce from all importunity, during which the subject never should be mentioned to her. This is the ground on which we now are. Elizabeth, glad to put off the evil day, which can only be a day of some few thunder-storms, and then a clear sky, makes herself as happy as she can, resolved as ever on the point; and Mr. Arden, seeing her so happy, interprets her conduct by the light of his own wishes. He does not speak a word on the subject, because he will in no wise break the bond. All parties, in fact, are glad to maintain the peace as long as possible.

"But the time draws on fast that must end it. Elizabeth early in October is of age. We shall then be at home, give a great *fête* on the occasion, and the day following Elizabeth must make her final avowal. It is an awful moment to look forward to. There will be storms, but we must let them blow over. Elizabeth is too determined to give way, even if she had no other motive to strengthen her; and her father

is not a tyrant; he will be angry, and—well, well!"

Here Miss Nelly dropped into silence, as if pondering on the "well, well!" and Vincent, thanking her most heartily for her explanation, and her generous friendship for him, said:

"Profoundly satisfactory as it is to me, dear Miss Arden, that Elizabeth has given Lord Chellaston no engagement, that he has nothing to upbraid her with, and that she has given no promise but that of considering the matter to her father, I feel that under present circumstances I ought not to stay here. When Mr. Arden knows of our attachment, he will have a great right to accuse me of using his hospitality to steal away his daughter's affections. The suspicion, in all cases, may be against me, of being actuated by interested motives. I ought at once to ask Mr. Arden's permission to pay my addresses, or leave the place, and wait till Elizabeth has given her final refusal to Lord Chellaston."

"Nonsense! my dear Vincent," said Miss Nelly, in her quick way; "you would do a very foolish and useless thing. You would at once raise a riot, break up our blessed peace before

its time, and do yourself no good. You have not clandestinely stolen Elizabeth's heart. To my knowledge, it was given most promptly and freely at the first sight of you. Mr. Arden would refuse you angrily: he would refuse anybody till his promise to Lord Chellaston expires. Elizabeth would no more have consented to have his Lordship if she had not seen you, than she will now she has. So be quiet, I beg of you—nay, I insist. You do not come into the play at all. All the harm is done that can be done, and that is none whatever; and so why should you, when least of all necessary, make disturbance which would send us all home in a mood that I am frightened to think of?

"Besides," continued Miss Nelly, looking with a humorous smile at Vincent, with his puzzled aspect, "I tell you again, I don't want to flatter you; but you talk of Elizabeth's fortune as a ground of suspicion of the purity of your motives. Is a handsome, clever, and well-educated young man, then, to avoid a handsome and clever girl who may like him, because she has a fortune? That's an odd reason. Why, don't you think Elizabeth values you a vast deal more than her fortune? Ah! if you

knew the heart of a noble woman, you would know with what a rapture of pleasure she puts the finest fortune into the hands of the man that she believes worthy of her love. Elizabeth's fortune is a fine fortune. Eight thousand a year of unencumbered and real estate is a very fine fortune; but then you are no beggar, Mr. Dorrington. You are of excellent family, of a wealthy family, with youth, talent, and noble principles—you compel me to say all this—capable of placing you very high—very high, my dear friend. Is not that a fine fortune? Oh! I have had some talk of you with Mr. Bathurst. I know that your travels, with all the important knowledge of peoples, and their relations to English interests, will bring you a brilliant reputation. You have friends, and may, if you like, climb high in either law or statesmanship. Come, come, we are not so uncalculating as you may think. Don't you give Elizabeth credit for mind and heart, that would rejoice to share the fortunes of such a man, rather than of one who would only look on Arden Lodge as a better sort of dog-kennel, or place of his racing-stud?"

"What has Bathurst been saying to you?"

said Vincent, rising and feeling as hot as if the setting sun had been all this time pouring its rays upon him. "It is really too bad, he has not kept faith."

"Pooh! pooh!" said Nelly Arden, rising too, "it is all right. Well we are going now, and you understand that there is to be no silly sentimentalism. You stay quietly, and go along with us. We shall not be long now."

The night was fast falling. To their right shone aloft the fire-column of Vesuvius, before them came the soft breeze from the sea; and in the soft moonlight they drove back to their inn.

How the remainder of the stay in Naples was passed we leave the reader to imagine as best pleases him. We shall only say, that in little more than a week, the Ardens, with Vincent in their company, embarked for Marseilles, and thence were soon travelling on towards Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

On a dull evening towards the end of September, Mrs. Dorrington was sitting in the old library at the Dene. She was busy with one of her favourite pieces of knitting. The fire was burning cheerily, and casting its now agreeable glow—for the weather had been stormy and was chill—on the books that filled the walls. The shutters towards the garden were not yet closed, and the wild drear light yet remaining without, only added to the very comfortable air of the room within. Mrs. Dorrington was sitting with her feet on the fender, and the bright face of Harriet Russell, who was seated on a footstool, and with her hands clasped on Mrs. Dorrington's knee, looking

up into hers. Beautiful and heart-cheering as was the scene, there was an expression of intense sympathy in the lovely round face of Harriet Russell, and a glisten of unshed tears in her clear blue eyes, which told that something which deeply affected her was the topic of these two friends; and could the spectator have seen the face of Mrs. Dorrington, he would have read there the saddest and the most depressing thoughts.

In fact, Mrs. Dorrington was in one of those low and sorrowful moods which at times weigh down the strongest heart, and the most trusting and religious spirit. Her moods were not moods of fancy, or of mere nervous weakness; she had substantial causes for sadness, and there was perhaps something in the season and the hour which operated to bring up in desolating association the trials and bereavements of an eventful life. The beautiful but bold Miss Georgina Belfield had just now married a man of indifferent character, and gone off with him to Canada, leaving her parents, now growing infirm, and without any other children, solitary, in that lonely, and as report said, haunted Broxtowe Grange.

This circumstance awoke in Mrs. Dorrington's

mind an inevitable memory of the relation in which her son Bulkeley had stood to this wayward but beautiful young woman. Yet Bulkeley still lived with all the outward circumstances of a religious life about him. No remorse seemed capable of touching his callous heart. In vain had Mrs. Dorrington, with all the anguish of a mother, striven to awake in him a feeling of the enormity of his transgressions. The reply only was, that one cannot think of such things for ever, "Enough for the day, is the evil thereof." Even on Mr. Dorrington, who was well aware of these circumstances, they seemed, weighed in the balance with Bulkeley's prosperous fortune, and the outwardly religious order of his life and household, to produce little impression. When he had seen his wife weeping over the, to her, frightful and woful condition of Bulkeley's mind, he would merely quote, passingly:

"To err is human—to forgive divine."

But in Mrs. Dorrington's mind these affairs were blended with the most bitter and humiliating memories of her whole life. They had a sting and gnawing torment in them that never

slept. She saw dark and stormy nights in which, with the faithful Sally Horobin bearing a lanthorn beneath her cloak, she had again and again had to traverse the lonely fields, amid rains and storm-winds towards that loathed Broxtowe Grange; to cross the swollen and turbid Fulbourne Brook, often roaring over the single plank which formed its bridge. She had made those darksome journeys with a bleeding heart, and with inward cries to God to help her to bear the burden which the sins of others had cast upon her: and to save the reputation of an erring woman, and of one near and dear to herself, had humbled herself to the dust in plans and offices of secrecy. Yet, spite of all her cares and her nocturnal visits which bowed her to the earth as if a millstone were hung about her neck, or were rather hurled down upon her suffering soul, never did she catch a glimpse of the solitary Grange, but there flashed upon her mind the certain persuasion that yet a deeper crime had been perpetrated there: one which had extinguished a young life, and left a haunting horror on the accursed place.

It was a place in her mind stained with more than one crime. Formerly, there had lived a

boy-proprietor. He was a pale and delicate youth, and he had a companion, his cousin, who was his playfellow from his cradle. Together the youths grew up to manhood; but the heir grew still paler, and must die. Then the old man Belfield had kept close watch about the dying youth's bed. The cousin was refused entrance till the dying youth, who had cried and cried for his beloved companion in vain—had expired. The will was opened, and the estate of Browtowe belonged to Nathan Belfield.

The young cousin-companion of the dead—penniless and now friendless—loudly complained of treachery and wrong. All life long had his cousin declared that if he died young, as he believed he should, he should be his sole heir: the thing was well and widely known. The exasperated youth, in his desperation, flung fire into the thatched roof of Broxtowe Grange, and fled. The fire raged, and left the house a blackened skeleton. Nathan Belfield cursed the hand that had done it, and restored the place again to a habitable condition. Never again was the incendiary cousin heard of; but from that day the people said, that on wild nights the pale dead youth wandered round the house,

wringing his hands, and crying amid the gusty winds: "All wrong!—all wrong!"

And there now went a story, that the spectre youth appeared with a young child on his arm, pale and wan as the misty moon; and in the old and gloomy orchard, beside a little roaring stream he stood, and cried piteously: "Wrong to me!—wrong to thee!—all wrong!—all wrong!"

And with these dismal thoughts there came up through Mrs. Dorrington's bosom, like the endless train of wild, black clouds, which float up from the west across the autumn sky, onward, and onward, as they would thus pass for ever, the many dark hours of her past life. The fate of poor Delmey and his beautiful and lost Christina; the bloody end of her brother Hinchliffe; the strange life and spirit of her mother, and the sad pilgrimage of her father. And amid these, she heard the winds howling as they howled when the midnight sea closed over her beloved Hetty Harrison and her children.

It was an hour when the heart seemed to send up all its entombed ghosts, and all its gloomy treasures—it was an hour of weakness and prostration, of agony and bloody sweat—

when the arrows that were struck deep and irradicably into the soul rankled, and spread through the fainting heart the taste and desolation of death. But of all these wringing sorrows, none was like that which pressed on the mother's heart from the sense of Bulkeley's state. Time would heal the rest—death would restore much that was lost; but where, asked the bleeding maternal soul, should she look for this son in heaven!

She felt that a baleful influence had long emanated and still continued to emanate from him, withering like a poison-gas the fortunes of those that she loved as life. His ostensible aid to Delmey had proved his ruin; and now she felt that her husband never returned from the home of this proud but sinful son, without bringing with him a deeper prejudice against Delmey's orphan children. They stood still disinherited in his will. Bulkeley stood there in the place of the eldest son.

And Vincent—so long absent—so slow to return. Months ago Mr. Bathurst had announced his speedy arrival. He had written from Naples, from Tours, from Paris, and from London, that he was coming—coming fast—

coming impatiently, but his friends detained him. Did he forget his mother and his connections for those new friends? Was she to mourn in him too a diminished love?

There was a knock at the room door. Without moving, the unhappy mother said: "Come in!" She believed it to be Sally Horobin come to close the shutters and bring in the lights. "Come in!" The door opened, but Mrs. Dorrington moved not, nor saw who entered. But at that instant Harriet Russell sprang up with a quick cry, and gazed in speechless astonishment towards the door. Mrs. Dorrington turned, gave also a loud shriek, and fell into the arms of her long absent son!

Who cannot imagine the transports of joy of this mother over this beloved and thus suddenly recovered son? Mother and son stood in a long and silent embrace. Then Mrs. Dorrington, gazing with wonder on her son, exclaimed passionately: "My Vincent! my dearest Vincent! do I see thee once again!" She showered heart-glowing kisses upon him, laughed hysterically, and sunk fainting in his arms.

When she recovered from this, she gave way

to streams of gushing silent tears, holding his hands and gazing on him with a smile of deepest love, but without power to speak. At length grown somewhat calmer, she was struck with amazement at his altered looks. The slim youth was returned the tall, well-knit young man, whose complexion spoke of Eastern suns, but whose bright, clear, loving, and serious eyes, told that he came back with all his old affections undiminished, and with a world of knowledge and experience, that breathed spiritually from his general aspect. He was the handsome, powerful man, full of the strength and intelligence of his wide extended life.

But beside the enraptured mother, stood Harriet Russell also shedding tears of lively sympathy; and when Mrs. Dorrington, as if recollecting herself, said:

"But, my dearest Vincent, let me introduce a beloved young friend, whom you do not know:" Harriet Russell stepping before Vincent said:

"Oh no! we have met before. And you are Vincent Dorrington? Do you not recollect me?"

Vincent gazed in surprise; seemed to recal something which he had lost sight of, and said:

"Certainly, we have met before; but where, for the life of me, I cannot say."

"It was at Dijon," said Harriet Russell. "Do you forget that scene in the wood? do you forget the young lady that you rescued, and conducted to the Mayor?"

A mist seemed to clear from the astonished young man's mind, a sunshine of pleasant surprise spread over his face, and clasping Harriet's outstretched hand, he exclaimed:

"Oh! surely, now I remember it all. Now I remember again that pleasant face; but how long ago!—It is years; and you here?"

"Yes, here; safe, happy, and owing it all to you. And that you should be the son of my dearest Mrs. Dorrington."

"And you were that brave fellow, my Vincent, who succoured Harriet? Did I not once dream so? But God bless you for it, and for coming again thus to us at last! How came you," added Mrs. Dorrington, in a new surprise, "how came you to enter so still, so unannounced?"

"Not a soul saw me," said Vincent, smiling. "I left the chaise which brought me from the county-town at the end of the village, and ordered the driver to wait for ten minutes and then come on. I hastened through the village. There were but few people out, no one knew me. I

reached the hall door, I entered, still saw no one, till, through the glass door, I saw you sitting."

"But what are we doing?" cried Mrs. Dorrington, nearly beside herself. "We must call your father, every one will want to see you." She was running off.

"Hush!" said Vincent, detaining her; "I will surprise my father, I will walk into his room." Mrs. Dorrington stood still, and Vincent hastened lightly along the passage to his father's room. He opened the door without ceremony, and walked quietly in. Mr. Dorrington was poring over a book by the light of his lamp. He raised his head, saw the stranger, rose, bowed, and then starting as if he had seen an apparition, exclaimed: "What, Vincent?" and in the next instant father and son stood with clasped hands, with tears of joy glittering in their eyes.

"My boy!" said Mr. Dorrington, "how you have surprised me! But where is your mother?"

"She knows, father," said Vincent, and at the same instant, Mrs. Dorrington, Harriet Russell, and a whole crowd of servants behind them, entered the room. Foremost rushed Sally Horobin, clasped Vincent with frantic energy, as

though he had still been her nurseling, and then clasping his hand, and kissing it amid showers of tears, looked up at him and said:

"Eh! and where hast thou not been? In Jerusalem and Macedonia; and here thou art! God Almighty make us thankful for it."

There was a joyful acclamation of welcomes from a host of voices, amid which Sally Horobin exclaimed:

"But I mun run and let Mester Gould know."

At this instant, however, out burst the most jubilant peal of the church bells, filling all the air with their riot, and Sally Horobin cried:

"There! the Vicar or Mester Greatorex have found it out, and got before me. My! but they will be in a fine taking at Mr. Vincent's coming."

Sally's observations were cut short by a loud rat-tat at the door, and in hastened the tall thin form of Jeremiah Gould, and the tall stout one of the farmer.

We will not pretend to describe the joy of these hearty old friends, nor to express that which reigned through the whole house, and flew like wildfire through the whole village. The farmer had accidentally learned the fact from the driver

of the chaise asking his way to the Dene. He had flown to the chief bell-ringer, and bade him collect his colleagues, and almost knock down the old steeple with their noise, the loudest that ever had been heard from the bells of Westwood. He had then flown to the Vicar's, and here they were, all wonder and exultation. And here they were not alone. Outside there was a loud buzz of voices, and Sally Horobin ran in, clapping her hands, and crying, as the tears ran down like little brooks: "They are all here!—they are all here! Everybody's here, and wanten to see Mr. Vincent!"

Vincent went out, where he was received with loud hurrahs, and was soon engaged in shaking hands, by the light of candles, which the servants brought out, with some scores of the villagers whom he had known from his infancy. This done, he went in, followed by fresh hurrahs; and the happy family, with the Vicar and Farmer Greatorex, sate down to supper, now laid in the library, and were soon deep in a world of talk, as spacious and various as that through which Vincent had for five years been wandering. Nobody seemed more really delighted, more admired the improvement of Vincent's person,

and the intelligence and manly character of his bearing, than his father. He listened with pride and pleasure to the various accounts which Vincent gave in answer to queries about his abode in distant lands, and showed by his zeal to diffuse a hospitable welcome amongst the whole circle of in-dropping neighbours, that he was deeply affected by his son's return.

The joy of Mrs. Dorrington and the venerable Vicar words are not yet invented which will adequately express. It was only when on her knees before her Creator, before retiring to rest, that Mrs. Dorrington could pour out her full heart; and as for the Vicar, he seized his violin on reaching home, and played over a dozen fine portions of Haydn and Mozart in his most extraordinary manner, and to the astonishment of Mr. and Mrs. Toby, before he could reduce his excitement and get a wink of sleep.

The farmer had somewhat satisfied himself by the stupendous clangour which the ringers had kept up for a couple of hours, and seating himself on reaching home in his easy chair, with a span new pipe, he smoked, and related to his family, till three o'clock in the morning,

things which Vincent had detailed, and which, in the farmer's version, assumed a guise more marvellous than the exploits of Lemuel Gulliver, or the flights of Munchausen.

CHAPTER X.

We may well conceive that in the simple village of Westwood, Vincent Dorrington was the most wonderful person who had ever appeared there. The fame of his travels was something unparalleled. Wherever, for some days, he was seen, there was a general turning out to gaze on him. The villagers said that he could talk all the languages that were heard at Babel; and through Sally Horobin, the account of the strange and splendid dresses of Turks, and Greeks, and she believed Chinese, and still more outlandish people, all silk and gold, and such swords and daggers, it was most marvellous to hear.

Vincent was just as affable and smiling as when he went away, and as he went to and fro to call on his friends, and to see his little nephews and niece—his very first visit—he nodded kindly to all as he passed. The simple people declared, with wonder, that he was just as free as if he had never seen the Grand Sultan, and the Emperor of Morocco!

At home, anxious was the desire to learn precisely the footing on which he stood with his new friends, the Ardens. He had, in his letters, promised faithfully and fully to state this, and he now did it to his mother in all candour. Mrs. Dorrington could not help expressing intense anxiety as to the result. The fact that Mr. Arden, whose aristocratic temperament was so well known, would ever consent to give up the alliance with Lord Chellaston, and accept Vincent, was to her incredible.

"There will be much trouble, my dear Vincent," she said; "and I fear, fear greatly, that though Miss Arden may be a noble young woman—I hear she is very beautiful, but she is still a woman—she cannot be insensible to the brilliant rank offered to her; and will, therefore, probably give way. And, my dear Vincent,

how will you bear it? And what will your father say?"

Vincent smiled.

"My dear mother," he said, "I only ask you to do one thing—put yourself in Elizabeth's place, and say what *you* would do. High, immensely high, as I estimate the nobility of your nature, dearest mother, I place that of Elizabeth side by side with it. Elizabeth will never change—never give way: her heart is noble and true as ever beat in woman's bosom, and on that point I am perfectly at rest. For all else we will wait, and endeavour to act as becomes us towards God and our own hearts."

"You speak like yourself, my dear son," said Mrs. Dorrington, "and I will hope that Miss Arden is as devoted as you believe; but the world is powerful, and greatness has a terrible charm."

"Dear mother," said Vincent, "I know a way to cure all your fears at once."

"What is that, my Vincent?"

"See Elizabeth, and you will never more distrust her. She is one of your own stamp. Had you had a daughter, she must have been another Elizabeth."

"And when shall I see her?" asked Mrs. Dorrington, smiling.

"They will be at home in a few days. You must go to the grand *fête* at her birthday, not ten days hence. I have an invitation for my father and you."

"No, Vincent, we cannot go to that great *fête:* it will be something quite fearful! Your father would under no circumstances go; and then it is, you say, that the affair with Lord Chellaston must be decided. Pending that, how could your father or I go to Arden Lodge? No, that is not to be thought of; but I long to see Miss Arden—most anxiously, most affectionately. That she loves you, makes me love her dearly, though unseen."

"You shall see her," said Vincent; "and till then, 'let perfect love cast out fear.'"

Here the subject ceased. Probably Mrs. Dorrington satisfied her husband on this head, for he made no inquiries, and seemed quite satisfied with Vincent.

One day soon after, a servant in the Arden livery on horseback delivered a note at the Dene for Vincent.

"They are come, mother," said Vincent,

entering her room with a flush of excitement on his features, and his eyes sparkling with delight. "The Ardens are come; I am going at once to see them. That is Elizabeth's note:" he handed it to his mother, who read it, and rising up, said: "What a sweet note! and what a lovely hand! But my heart beats for you, Vincent. Pray God all goes well!"

Vincent kissed his mother affectionately, and the next moment was on his horse and riding rapidly up the village.

It was a new and intoxicating feeling to Vincent Dorrington to be riding through the beech-woods of Arden, and towards the fine old house, as the friend of the family, as the lover of its beautiful and accomplished heiress. He felt it like a waking dream of poetry and romance. As he came in sight of the old house, standing so stately on its lofty ground, and surrounded by its fine old trees, he could scarcely believe his own senses—that that was his own Elizabeth's, and would one day be his and her home. No fear affected him. He seemed to have a faith as firm and as delightful as his love to Elizabeth Arden was pure and deep, that all would go well. His whole mind and being

were covered with a sentiment of the most inexpressible and superhuman joy. Into a moment like that, what years of life and transport are condensed!

He was now at the door. He leaped from his horse, which a smart groom hastened to take charge of. He rang: one of the very servants who had been with them in Italy opened the door, and bowing with a smile of recognition, led the way along the spacious hall, with its noble paintings and its statuary, to a room where, being announced, he was bade to enter, and found Mr. Arden and the two ladies seated at luncheon.

All rose, and received him with the glad cordiality of their Italian days. All were looking admirably. Elizabeth seemed to glow with beauty and happiness.

Vincent sate down with them, and they conversed with their old familiar vivacity of all that had taken place since they parted in London.

"I hope you found your parents quite well?" said Mr. Arden, and being answered in the affirmative, continued: "Well, and I am glad to see you here. I long for you to know Arden well; I think you will say that Italy can boast

of nothing in its own way finer. I am going just now to Dalling, but the ladies will show you about."

"You must love this dear Arden," said Elizabeth, enthusiastically; "I think I love it better than ever since I have been away from it."

Mr. Arden went, and Miss Nelly and Elizabeth went with Vincent all through that fine old house: its spacious rooms looking out on three different sides on the most truly English landscapes of wood and field, with bright gleams of the wandering Wilder in the valley; its fine paintings, and the noble library enchanted him. There was a quiet and a stately grace about everything, that, seen with Elizabeth, her whole being radiating with love and pleasure, and with delight in pointing out to Vincent every object that had been familiar to her from childhood, gave him a feeling that seemed to belong rather to heaven than to earth.

"And now," said Elizabeth, "I hope you are not disinclined for a ride. I long once more to visit my old haunts. Come, I will be your guide. My horse is already saddled: instead of the groom I will take you."

She hastened away to put on her habit, and in a short time they were on horseback, and descending the fine swelling slopes that led down to the valley of the Wilder. It was like enchantment for Vincent to be galloping over those rich woodland scenes, and along the banks of that clear and well-known river, with her whom he had first seen in Italy, and yet who from childhood had been here at home. As they advanced, full of the felicity of their mutual and fresh affection, Elizabeth pointed out her favourite spots, and Vincent again pointed out such as were familiar to him; and—

"How strange," would Elizabeth say, "that you should so well know these spots!"

They pursued their way for a mile along the winding Wilder, and then Miss Arden turned to the right, and they continued to ascend by woodland slopes and lanes, and old farms, till they reached an elevated ground, where the land was left covered with its native heath, and all was solitary and still. Presently Elizabeth galloped her horse up to the high edge of this moorland, and a noble view burst upon them. Their horses stood upon the crest of precipitous rocks; the tops of the trees which grew at the

base of the cliffs spreading just beneath their feet, and far below them stretched solemn woods, and far, far away lay an immense extent of country.

"Ha!" said Vincent, delighted; "how fine! how very fine! I remember how struck I was when I first saw this."

Elizabeth looked at him with a face of beaming delight, and said gaily:

"Yes, I thought you must admire this. This is my very favourite spot. How often I have rambled up here in the summer months, and enjoyed beyond expression the fresh air, the vast view, the woodland sounds of woodpecker and pheasant, and the fresh forest smells. Oh! I am sure you will love this dear old Arden."

Vincent pressed her extended hand, and they rode slowly down the heath, side by side, in talk that—we did not presume to overhear.

That afternoon Mrs. Dorrington had gone into her garden to see the ravages of the late stormy weather repaired amongst her autumnal flowers. The sun was once more shining warm and clear, as it often does in late September days. She was now seated in the Nest, and while the glow of the sunshine fell pleasantly around, her thoughts were engaged with the

return of Vincent, and her anxiety regarding his attachment to Miss Arden. She heard a light footstep, she turned her head, and there stood before her a startling apparition.

It was a young lady of singular elegance of appearance and loveliness. She stood in her riding-habit, with one hand holding up its long skirts, and in the other her small whip. She was gazing on Mrs. Dorrington with a smiling countenance, full of the most charming sweetness, and of profound respect.

Mrs. Dorrington rose, advanced towards her, and asked whom she had the pleasure of thus unexpectedly seeing. With a glow of rosy red diffused over her beautiful features, and a smile full of arch meaning, she looked aside, and Vincent, stepping from the screening foliage of the shrubs, stood by her side. The whole truth flashed upon Mrs. Dorrington; and the next moment she clasped the stranger in her arms, and they kissed each other affectionately.

"Ah! my dear Miss Arden!" said Mrs. Dorrington: then looking with deep emotion at the lovely stranger,—"I no longer wonder that Vincent did not return. God bless you, my

dear daughter, as I hope to call you; who can see you without loving you?"

"Did not I say so, mother?" exclaimed Vincent, with joyous pride. "You and Elizabeth cannot avoid loving each other."

Elizabeth Arden held the hand of Mrs. Dorrington tenderly, and said:

"Dear Mrs. Dorrington! what a happy day this is to me. How happy I shall be in your love. And," continued she, looking round, "what a sweet place this is. How pleasant to think that Vincent grew up here. I shall love to explore it; but now, dear Vincent, we must return; my aunt will think that we are lost."

"But you must see Mr. Dorrington first, my dear Miss Arden," said Mrs. Dorrington, leading her towards the house.

"Oh, dear no!" said Elizabeth, blushing; "I am rather afraid of Mr. Dorrington; perhaps he may not like me."

"But here he is;" said Vincent, and Mr. Dorrington, who had heard of their being there, met them at the moment. Mr. Dorrington was evidently greatly struck and charmed with the appearance of Elizabeth. Her rank and fortune

would have given her great respect in his eyes, but her very lovely and ladylike form, and the sweet intelligence of her countenance and manners, impressed him with obvious admiration. They proceeded for a moment into the house, and then mounting their horses, she and Vincent, cantered rapidly away towards Arden.

The effect of this visit at the Dene was decisive on the feelings of both Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington. That Vincent should have such a woman for his wife, was the highest reach of a parent's desire in that respect. That Elizabeth Arden was as sincere and noble-hearted as she was beautiful, they were fully and instinctively convinced. That she was as tenderly attached to Vincent as he was to her, they saw in her whole being; but they thought on the dread time that awaited her so soon, and they inly prayed God to strengthen and sustain her. Sally Horobin who had gazed at her with silent wonder, at once set it down as a settled match with Vincent, and declared "that she was the very handsomest woman that ever stepped into shoe-leather. She never knew before what a handsome woman was. No wonder Vincent had gone to Macedonia after her."

Vincent was a daily visitor at Arden Lodge. He rode in every direction with Elizabeth. She introduced him to her aunt, the widow of the late George Arden at Dalling, and to her son Charles, as well as to the Rector of Dalling, Mr. Dewey, and his wife, two most intelligent and amiable people. The days rolled on in smoothness and sunshine, as the river rolls towards the cataract.

The great and decisive day was now fast approaching. Invitations were already sent out to the chief families of the nobility and gentry in the midland counties. A professional decorator had arrived from London to execute all the necessary preparations, all the illuminations and embellishments, which were, for one night, to turn the antique house into a fairy palace.

As this momentous day drew nearer, of course all parties, except it were Mr. Arden himself, felt the weight of anxiety sink more painfully on their bosoms. In him there was a grave air and mood, but still nothing which could augur a suspicion that his known will and profound wish could be disputed. Nelly Arden was more silent and affectionate to her niece, and Elizabeth herself had a calm gravity about her

which indicated that she felt the serious nature of the ordeal through which she had to pass, but was prepared to endure it. When Vincent tenderly expressed his deep sympathy for her, and wished the trial had been one in which he could plead for her, she only smiled, patted his cheek playfully, and said, she meant to conquer by patience.

The dreaded time—that day which should have been a day of unalloyed festivity and gladness—was now to come. As Miss Nelly and Elizabeth had discussed the preparations, they had asked Vincent's opinion as to this and that which might be done, and which his extensive experience of such scenes in various countries, enabled him to give them new ideas upon—so far as concerned the temporary embellishments and decorations. But two days before the evening itself, they had forbidden him to come up to the Lodge. They had made him promise not to come near it. They would have its full effect to break upon him, undiminished by observance of the progress of the preparations. A certain number of guests were to remain all night, and he was to be one in order

to be introduced to some select friends on the following day.

With this understanding, Vincent took his leave for two days, and passed the interim in a state of anxious foreboding, which it is easier to conceive than it would be agreeable to experience.

CHAPTER XI.

THE evening of the Arden *fête* came. Vincent Dorrington with a beating heart, and clad in a simple but elegant full dress suit, entered his father's carriage, accompanied by the blessings and inward prayers of his mother, and proceeded towards Arden Lodge. It was a fine evening for the season; fresh but mild. The moon was just rising over the Arden woods as he reached the line of hill between that place and Westwood, and began to descend. Fleecy clouds were slowly floating through the sky, and even at this distance he could perceive the glow of light which seemed to invest Arden Lodge as with a luminous atmosphere; and to

the right he caught the murmur of human voices, and the blaze of rockets against the sky, where the people of Dalling were celebrating the majority of their future mistress.

As they reached the lodge-gates at the entrance of the beech woods, Vincent found them standing open, and over them spanned an evergreen arch, hung with coloured lamps. The little lodge was brightly illuminated, and the lodge-keeper and his family in their very best, were standing at the door to see the various equipages go by, and to make their respectful bows and curtseys. Numbers of carriages—and some of them very stately ones—with richest liveries, and broadest escutcheons on their panels, denoting high nobility, were already driving on before, and others were heard coming after.

Once through the lodge-gates the scene was like that of Fairyland itself. Far as the eye could reach, the ancient beeches which bounded the drive were hung with many-coloured lamps, which made a line of fire, as from rubies, sapphires, and all precious stones; while seen near, they cast a sort of rainbow light on the foliage above and around them, soft and poetical. Nor were the lamps confined to the mere road-

sides; but here and there as they advanced, in the opening of the woods, they cast their tender light amongst the old trees, till it seemed as if Oberon and Titania were really come to do honour to this natal day in regions which must for ages have been their favourite haunts.

Vincent was struck with the superb effect. He felt in it the taste of Elizabeth, and something too of the treasured suggestions which he had given, that were to him touchingly flattering. But the rush and rapid concourse of carriages upon carriages, also seemed now first to impress upon his imagination in its fullness, the high standing and importance of the Arden family, and made him, in a manner, shrink inwardly at the idea of the daring nature of his own aspiring love. His heart beat still more quickly, and a sickening feeling—as if he were deceiving himself, as if all that had passed during the last month were a feverish dream—came over him. But he thought on the true character of Elizabeth, and putting from him by an effort any thought derogatory to her, he was anxious to push on, and come face to face with her and with his titled rival.

But precisely at this moment his progress was

arrested altogether. They had arrived within about a furlong of the house; but this brought him to where other and still more frequented roads united, and merged themselves into one broad drive up to the front of the mansion. Here was a dense line of carriages, all waiting their turn to advance and set down. Vincent looked from the window, and saw still other equipages advancing from the right, and others already defiling to their appointed places, till the conclusion of the *fête*. As they again slowly advanced he could perceive all round the lodge, the old oaks and beeches, hung with their lamps, casting down their mild splendour on the greensward of the open, swelling lawn; and before the house, which seemed one blaze of radiance, an awning erected, extending over a large space, beneath which the carriages passed to set down the guests. The awning was of the purest white. It appeared to be supported on light pillars, round which climbed tropical creepers in full flower; artificial might be these blossoms, but they had all the ease and life of nature to the eye. The creepers spread from arch to arch, and hung in rich festoons of leaves and blossoms, amid which hundreds

of small lamps again diffused their tinted beams.

There was a constant progress of carriages beneath this great canopy, passing in at one end, pausing a moment to set down the guests, and then passing out at the other. As Vincent reached this scene, he saw that the entire under side of the canopy was enriched with painted branches and long spreading and slender shoots, as if continuations of the creepers which wound up the pillars, and presenting blossoms of the most gorgeous character. But there was time only for a hasty glance; the great doors of the hall stood open; and troops of tall men in the Arden livery, and fully powdered, stood on each hand to receive the guests, who were constantly ascending the steps amidst the sonorous announcement of their names.

The large hall was brilliant with lights. Groups of young men of high aristocratic appearance were standing in eager conversation. Ladies in the richest dresses of silks, satins, and velvets, and dazzling with diamonds, were descending the grand staircase. They were assiduously waited upon by the young gentlemen, and on their offered arms escorted onwards. Vincent

followed in the throng. As he passed along, he noticed with a hasty glance the taste with which the hall was adorned. Shrubs in full blossom, which must have been carefully tended to bring them in precisely at this season, and vines trained on frames of five or six feet high, and hung with a profusion of the most superb bunches, alternately, stood here and there on pedestals along the walls, and with statues and pictures produced a fine effect.

But the next instant his name was announced, and he found himself in the great drawing-room, in a crowd of splendidly dressed people, and amid a blaze of light. He cast a rapid glance around to discover Elizabeth and her aunt. They were nowhere to be seen. In the centre of the immense room, and in the midst of a number of gentlemen, most of them of mature years, and of grave and dignified appearance, stood Mr. Arden. He, however, appeared to be attentively listening to conversation going on in the group around him, and unconscious of Vincent's presence. There was a strange feeling in thus being plunged into a host of people who had, many of them, been living all their lives in the districts around him, and who yet were all

as strange, as if he had met them in a saloon of Bassora or Ispahan. Vincent had been accustomed to roam through cities and through crowds a stranger, and even with a feeling of pleasure in being unknown. But here he felt a sense of isolation and depression. He was, in a manner, at home, and more strange than if he had been in the wilds of Persia or Syria.

Whole ranks of splendidly attired and beautiful women, and knots of haughty-looking men, seemed to gaze on him with a curious and yet cold indifference, as he gradually made his way past them, in search of some one that he knew. He could discover no one; and coming near the group in which Mr. Arden stood, catching his eye, he bowed, expecting that gentleman to give him his usual friendly recognition, and introduce him to his friends. But Mr. Arden only returned his bow with a distant and freezing stiffness; and without opening his lips, turned and renewed his conversation with the gentleman next him, an elderly, tall, and gravely important personage, with remarkably white hair.

Vincent was thunderstruck by his reception. What could it mean? There must be something dreadfully significant in it. Had his

presence become unwelcome from some cause? Had there been any *éclaircissement* with Lord Chellaston? He stood transfixed as by a sudden frost. A misery of darkness fell over him, and he felt disposed to retire at once from the house. A flash of agony passed through his mind at the recollection that he had been forbidden to approach the house for two days. But that Elizabeth could have any share in this reception, he flung from his thoughts with indignation.

At this moment he was accosted by a familiar voice, and turning, of all persons whom he would not at that juncture have wished to encounter, perceived Mrs. Parrymore, most magnificently dressed, who said:

"Oh, Mr. Vincent! you here alone! Where are Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington? They are here, of course?"

"No," said Vincent, commanding himself as much as possible. "They were invited; but you know how little they go out."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Parrymore; "but to-night!—on such an occasion—and you so intimate a friend of the family. I should have thought—"

But luckily for Vincent, at this moment Captain Parrymore, nodding to him, with a "How do you do, Mr. Dorrington?" laid hands on his wife, saying: "Lord and Lady Scarsdale, my dear!" and Mrs. Parrymore, being immediately engaged in profound courtesies with them, Vincent moved on amid the crowd, who were all engaged in animated and merry conversation, full of constant recognitions and familiar with old acquaintance.

A pleasant face now accosted Vincent: it was that of the Rev. Mr. Dewey, the Rector of Dalling, with his amiable wife. They both entered into friendly conversation with Vincent; asked if he knew many people there, and on his replying scarcely any, Mr. Dewey pointed out to him many of the more remarkable, whose names, indeed, he had heard loudly announced from time to time, without paying much attention.

"There," said he, directing his glance towards a tall, thin gentleman, near Mr. Arden, "is the Duke of Newcastle. That grave, elderly, dignified gentleman, with white hair, close to Mr. Arden's right hand, is the Earl of Elvaston, the father of Lord Chellaston, the affianced bridegroom of Miss Arden."

"And Lord Chellaston?" asked Vincent, with an effort to conceal his feelings.

"That is Lord Chellaston," added Mr. Dewey, "close to his father."

Vincent saw a tall, fresh-coloured, and handsome young man, with light-brown hair, and an expression which indicated an attachment rather to the race-ground and the stubble-field, than to intellectual pursuits; but with no lack of native sense, or aristocratic breeding. The survey of his rival gave a sensible relief to Vincent: he felt at once that he was not the man for Elizabeth.

But Mr. Dewey again drew his attention to the group about Mr. Arden.

"There is one man," he observed, "that you must recognise."

"That is Canning," said Vincent. "Yes, I saw him lately in the House of Commons, and once seen you cannot forget his features. Perhaps it would be difficult to say in what he differs so peculiarly from all other men; but there is something in the round, well-developed, bald head; in his handsome, regular features; in his proud, yet quiet bearing; but still more in the eye of the wit, the scholar, and the states-

man, which seems to glance calmly over the whole scene, and yet has a spirit in it which you perceive detects the folly which is present, and enjoys, inwardly, the sarcasm which baseness and intrigue—which think themselves unseen—would, in another place, call forth in withering keenness."

"Yes," said Mr. Dewey, "there is a singular mixture in his expression, of the broad mind of the sagacious statesman, and the subtle element of the wit. But I am sorry to see that he is much altered of late. The opposition which he finds to his more liberal policy, I fear is pulling him down. There are no few of his friends who are greatly anxious about him. You observe that slender youth talking with Lord Chellaston, and some of his companions, that is Lord George Bentinck, Canning's nephew. He is as great a better on the turf as Lord Chellaston himself; and yet he is said to be most attached and serviceable to his illustrious uncle: he is his private secretary.

"But see! there are numbers of our Midland County grandees present;" and he ran over the names of Talbots, Shrewsburys, Curzons, Harringtons, Bagots, Middletons, Bentincks, Howes,

Pierrepoints, Vernons, Cavendishes, Manners, Ferrers, Pagets, Stanhopes, Fitzherberts, Fanes, Wilmots, Willoughbys, Boothbys, Poles, Charltons, Fowkeses, Lumleys, Peels, Needs, Sherbrookes, Meynells, and a host of others, titled and untitled, who had been familiar to his ears from childhood, but whom he now for the first time saw. "There," said Mr. Dewey, "is Lord Melbourne, from Melbourne; and there are, I see, some of the remarkable aristocracy of our country—the aristocracy of enterprise and invention. Yonder is Sir Richard Arkwright, the son of the great cotton-spinning discoverer; there is a Strutt, of Derby; and near him is a Crompton—all names familiar to you as connected with Midland County mechanical genius. Near the farther window, speaking with a very old lady, is a gentleman you will know—Dr. Darwin, the son of the celebrated poetical botanist. Near him is a Sacheverel Sitwell, a descendant of the notorious Dr. Sacheverel; and, by the bye, I see Mr. Gisborne, the son of the late Rector of Yoxall, and the poet of Needwood Forest. I must introduce you to him, and to some other of these worthies. Ay, there too is Mr. Mundy, of Markeaton, the

son of another Needwood poet, and one of the most upright magistrates that ever lived."

Some one here claimed Mr. Dewey's attention, and Vincent gazed on the splendid assembly, thinking that he had never seen a finer gathering of handsome, independent-looking men, and beautiful women, in any part of the world; but they struck him as cold, haughty, and painfully opposed to the easy and unassuming politeness which distinguished the very highest personages of foreign countries. But he did not know that he was standing here in a very different position to any that he had maintained in any other part of the world. He knew not that he was an object of no small curiosity to some of those, who, though they seemed not to notice him, had scanned him narrowly as he had passed along, and that the poison-wind of prejudice — that "pestilence which walks in darkness"—had been breathed upon him by a powerful and deeply-interested party; that by them he had been represented as a daring and accomplished adventurer, who had aspired to thrust himself between Lord Chellaston and his promised bride—and who was said to have succeeded only too quickly with the lovely

heiress of Arden. That was the secret of the deadly coldness which surrounded him. Amongst themselves, who could be more affable, cordial, warm, and full of social and friendly gaiety?

But now a group entered which rivetted his most vivid attention. He felt a throb shoot through his heart, and his brow to flush. It was Miss Arden, having on each arm a young lady of proud and *distingué* appearance.

"Those," said Mrs. Dewey, addressing Vincent, as her husband was engaged with some other acquaintance, "are the Ladies Chellaston, sisters of Lord Chellaston."

Vincent gazed with deep emotion on the whole brilliant trio. The Ladies Chellaston were young women of striking figure, of a high and confident bearing, and with a mingled hauteur and laughing ease, nodding to and addressing their friends, they advanced up the room. They were dressed in the richest silks of the most brilliant colours, and actually blazed with a profusion of jewels. Elizabeth Arden, on the contrary, was distinguished by her remarkable simplicity. A dress of purest white satin, and a single band of gold set with diamonds in her black hair, and

bracelets to correspond, were her sole ornaments. She stood thus in strongest contrast to her companions, and Vincent thought he had never before conceived the full extent of her beauty. Her rich, raven hair; her dark, large eyes, with their long jetty lashes; her complexion, fresh as the purest marble, and to-day almost as pale, gave a sentiment to her exquisitely chiselled features that was transcendently poetical.

A sensation pervaded the whole company at the entrance of these three ladies. There was a simultaneous buzz and flutter. Vincent heard some one close to his elbow say: "What an angelic woman! How beautifully she will grace a coronet!"

"Yes," replied another voice; "Lord Chellaston has shown himself a man of taste. Such a woman, and such a fortune!"

"But is he quite sure of her?" asked a female voice. "Report says, there is a dangerous rival. A certain knight-errant, who shoots down robbers, rescues distressed ladies, and carries off their hearts."

There was a merry laugh.

"Oh! you mean young Dorrington," said a

man's voice. "He is a good-looking, and a very clever fellow, I hear. But what of that? Miss Arden is too good a judge to throw away a coronet for a mere commoner."

"Whist!" said the lady voice; "Dorrington is present somewhere, and he is a dangerous fellow: mind what you say."

At this instant Miss Arden, accompanied by her two companions, approached the spot where Vincent stood. His heart beat violently. How would she behave? Her eye fell on him; a slight flush passed over her cheek, but her bearing was calm, yet friendly, and in her eyes he saw the old truthful expression. He bowed, and at once Elizabeth giving him her hand, said in the most unembarrassed manner: "How do you do, Mr. Dorrington?" The address was formal from her lips, but the short, quick, pressure of her hand, sent to his heart such a message of undiminished love, as had a sensation of heaven in it. "All is right here!" was the thought which flashed through his bosom. He comprehended in a moment all the proprieties and the real facts of the situation.

"Do you know, said Elizabeth, as she passed on, "that Mr. Bathurst will be here? Pray look

out for him as quickly as you can, as his stay will be very short indeed."

She was gone, but the two Ladies Chellaston cast a proud, inquisitive look, as they swept forward, and the next moment he saw Lord Chellaston present himself with smiling assurance, take Elizabeth's arm, and lead her to her seat.

Vincent's eye was following this scene, when he felt a cordial pressure of his hand, and Nelly Arden nodded kindly in his face in passing, but without stopping to say a word. On her arm was a stately dignified-looking woman, and Mrs. Dewey whispered—"That is Lady Elvaston."

Vincent followed her for a moment with his eyes, and then cast them actively round the room to discover whether Mr. Bathurst was possibly already come. He was not to be seen: and Vincent made his way out, found one of the servants who had been with them in Italy, and inquired if Mr. Bathurst were yet come. He assured him that he was not, but that he would, the moment of his arrival, inform him that Mr. Dorrington was anxiously looking for him. With this assurance Vincent, feeling now wonderfully strong and cheerful, again returned to the draw-

ing-room. All was now in motion. He saw Mr. Arden conduct Lady Elvaston from the room; Lord Elvaston taking Miss Nelly, and Lord Chellaston, Elizabeth. The latter seemed in perfectly friendly and affable discourse, but it did not disturb him. Every gentleman selected his lady, and all were in progress towards the dancing-room. Vincent stood; Mr. and Mrs. Dewey had disappeared; Mr. Charles Arden came past in lively conversation with a splendidly-dressed lady, just nodded, and passed on. Vincent seemed to know nobody, and scarcely knew to whom to offer the courtesy of his arm.

But in a passing group, his eye fell on a young lady of slight figure and stature of scarcely middle height. Her face was peculiarly attractive, and her eyes were fixed on him as if she would, had she any warrant, claim acquaintance with him. He politely asked her if she would honour him by taking his arm, and a light like sunshine lit up her face. The proffered arm was instantly, and to his surprise, almost affectionately clasped.

"You do not know me, Mr. Dorrington," said the unknown fair one, with a face full of the most sunny and candid pleasure; "but I have so longed for an introduction to you! You

are so dear a friend of my cousin Charles! and you may have heard him name Clara Woodman."

"Clara Woodman!—Charles Bathurst's cousin!" exclaimed Vincent; "I am delighted!"

Vincent was at once at home: he had found the very companion that he would have chosen of all others for this evening, while Elizabeth was sundered from him by inexorable duties.

Clara Woodman!—the favourite cousin of Charles Bathurst! The little musical, poetical creature for whom he had collected so many airs in the most distant countries, and whose lively letters he had so often read to him on their journey. They had a thousand things to talk of, and they moved on in mutual congratulation.

They had now entered the large dancing-room, and simultaneously exclaimed in delightful surprise at the scene it presented. It was, in fact, a splendid picture-gallery, running along the whole of one side of the house, long enough and large enough to accommodate a great company like the present. At the head of the room was a gallery for the orchestra. Vases of richest Bohemian glass filled with the most

gorgeous flowers stood upon the balustrade of the gallery, and transparencies emblazoned with the Arden arms were attached to it in front. Lamps of ground glass and with painted flowers were affixed to the wainscot along the whole side of the room, andagarland of mingled evergreens and *immortels* hung in graceful festoons round the whole place. In the deep and ample bay-windows, seats were placed for the spectators of the dance, and sofas covered with the richest damask ran along each side of the room, at sufficient distance from the walls to allow of standers behind, yet, such was the width of the room, giving abundant space for the dancers. The sofas were for the dancers to repose on during the intervals. Over the heads of the spectators in the bay-windows were also suspended lamps and transparencies alternating, and of the same elegant designs as those on the other side of the room: the whole of the wall at the bottom of the room was covered with a magnificent mirror, which seemed to double in extent the brilliant scene.

The throngs of superbly-dressed people stood about here and there, so as least to interfere with the view, and the ample space left for the

dance; and from their frames the ancestors of the Ardens for many generations looked down from amongst landscapes by Claude and Poussin, and the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Titian, Guido, and numbers of the best artists of all ages.

Lord Chellaston opened the dance—a quadrille—with Elizabeth Arden, and the whole floor was at once covered with a maze of graceful figures moving in harmonious concert to the music.

"What a beautiful couple!" again heard Vincent from some one just by him. "Ah! they said that she would not have him: that she had given her heart to another. But no, no, she looks too clever to despise so brilliant a chance."

"Yes," replied a lady of very mature years, and bearing all the evidences of having lived contentedly on the fat of the land, "we have all our little fancies in our youth, but it is astonishing how easily we grow out of those things."

The dance was at an end; and Vincent seeing Elizabeth seated near him, stepped boldly forward, and begged her hand for the next.

"You have been late in asking," said she,

with a quiet smile; but still I have not *quite* forgotten you. See!"

She turned towards him the open page of a small mother-of-pearl *Tanz-Buch*, set with rubies, which he had bought in Vienna, and given her in Naples, and he saw his name inscribed for the very next dance—a waltz. Delighted at this proof of her unwavering regard, he returned for a moment to Miss Woodman, who was already engaged for the same dance, to solicit for himself in the next, when the lively creature, with eyes gleaming with the most extraordinary delight, and directed towards the orchestra, cried: "There! there they are!" At the same instant, there was one universal sensation and movement in the place; and, after a moment's pause of undisguised astonishment, out burst a deafening exclamation and clapping of hands: "Pasta! Pasta! Bravo! that is glorious!" was shouted from all sides.

The thunders of applause continued, and Vincents saw the celebrated singer, then in the very pride of her powers and her fame, making her most graceful salutations to the company from a platform in front of the orchestra, and the joyous face of Bathurst near her. They ap-

peared to have issued together from a side-door, and had taken the whole company by surprise, no such princely and luxurious pleasure being anticipated. There she was, however, beaming on them her most cordial and enchanting smile. There she was, her noble head set so majestically on her shoulders; her raven hair simply and closely braided with a strikingly classical effect, and encircled by a tiara of diamonds. Short and stout, as was really her person, there was a queenly grandeur in her bearing that gave a wonderful dignity to her presence, and the admirable beauty of her arms struck the spectators, even before raised in the most graceful motions, they gave a deeper intensity to the grandeur of her conceptions.

"I did not know she was in England," said one. "Nor I either," added another. But these observations were cut short by the profound silence which fell with a breathless power on the whole company, and the next instant the wonderful voice of that wonderful woman went with an extraordinary effect through the place. She sang "Di tanti palpiti," from the *Tancredi* of Rossini, and her voice, never more full, rich, or in more perfect harmony, seeming to clear itself

as she proceeded, soon filled the room with the most marvellous and enrapturing sound. The whole company was carried away with the witchery of her singing; and the most deafening applause followed every successive triumph of her art, and became at its conclusion thoroughly overwhelming.

The most distinguished of her hearers crowded round her at the close of her performance, and she was hidden from view by the throng who climbed on chairs, sofas, and window-seats to have a further view of her. It was some time before the dance could be resumed, but at length the waltz commenced, and Vincent and Elizabeth whirled down the long gallery in a style of grace and harmony which drew the most unequivocal applause, even from the most unwilling bosoms.

"Well, he really is a fine fellow," said a young lady of rank; "pity that he should have set his aim so much above his chance. I dare say Miss Arden would have liked him very well, had she not had so much more brilliant an engagement."

Waltz and quadrille now succeeded each other for some time, but Vincent had made his way to Bathurst, and his old friend drawing him away through the side door by which he and Pasta

had entered, they found themselves in a small room, evidently a lady's boudoir, and Bathurst gave Vincent the kindest embraces.

"My dear friend," he said, "I rejoice to see you looking so gay and buoyant even in the very field of battle. But we must make the most of our time. You are in the very midst of the most excited enemies. Your success in the heart of Miss Arden, has become fully known to the Elvaston family, through the usual channel on all such occasions—the servants of the different establishments. They have come to know all that passed in Italy, from the first day of your stay with the Ardens to the last. All has been detailed, and no doubt embellished. The deepest alarm has seized them. They are well aware of your formidable qualities: they have lost no opportunity of spreading a prejudice against you. It has told where they most wished it, except in Elizabeth's own case—with her father. You must have felt the arctic atmosphere which has surrounded you to night."

Vincent nodded. He had imagined much, and now comprehended all. "But courage," said Bathurst, "nothing can move you. See here, I have received this note from Miss Arden, through a faithful hand."

" Dear Mr. Bathurst,

" Seek out Vincent the moment you come. See that he is introduced to as many of our friends as possible. There is a terrible conspiracy against him, and to-day and to-morrow I must act a part, for both our sakes. What a cruel and dreadful task !—to-day and to-morrow —and then never while I live will I act a part more !

" Introduce Vincent to Canning, and to Clara Woodman. Let him know the whole of this, that he may be on his guard—may understand me and my aunt, and feel as happy as any of us can under these wretched circumstances. God bless you ! I trust immeasurably to you.

" Your faithful friend,

" E. A. A."

A mountain was thus thrown off Vincent's heart. He cared nothing for opposition or intrigue, so that Elizabeth was as firm as she thus showed herself, and as he felt she would, under all and through all.

" Madam Pasta will sing once more," said Bathurst, " and immediately after supper I must set out again with her to town. It is not generally known that she is just now in England. I

learnt it by accident, and by the consent of Mr. Arden, undertook the herculean task of getting her down here. Heavens! but what a task it has been! To get her consent and the consent of others to her appearance this once down here. She is in town making future arrangements for this country, and at most astounding prices; this is *entre nous*. But her moments are counted. And now I want Clara a moment: just wait here."

Bathurst disappeared by another door, and presently returned with Clara, who was all gaiety and enthusiasm.

"Why," said Bathurst, laughing; "you and my little coz have found each other out already by instinct. Now hear! Clara and I have laid a plan to surprise the good people here. Clara has been singing some of our Eastern melodies for the whole of this season with me in town. I have translated the songs, and so she has learned the real meaning, and has made herself perfect master or mistress of three or four of them in the original, so far as singing them goes. We propose, while the company is at supper, to take our station—we three—near the windows of the supper-room, and strike up one of those wild Eastern songs. We don't pretend to be Pastas,

but I am vastly mistaken if we don't startle them by the novelty of the thing. It is what they do not hear every day. Well, the supper-room, luckily, overlooks the gardens. We can conceal ourselves amongst the shrubs, and nobody can see us. You agree, Vincent?"

"With all my heart, but—" Here a tremendous burst of clapping arose in the next room.

"There is the Pasta again," said Bathurst, and they issued through the side-door into the room. More powerfully than ever the songstress poured out her wondrous notes. She gave them "Ombra adorata," from Zingarelli's *Romeo e Giulietta*—her great song as Romeo, in the tomb scene. Here her voice seemed to possess double its usual bell-like clearness, compass, and pathetic power. A perfect delirium seemed to seize the whole audience. More enthusiastically vehement than ever were the hearers in her applause. When this had subsided, the whole concourse, headed by the leading people, adjourned to the supper-room. Bathurst, Vincent, and Clara Woodman followed the throng, and looked into the room to behold its *tout ensemble*. The scene was as

magnificently beautiful as a dazzling display of plate, of flowers in vases of Bohemian and Venetian glass, and a great splendour of light from superb chandeliers of silver gilt, could make it. Orange and lemon trees, some full of fragrant flowers, others full of fruit, stood in the recesses of the large windows.

But the three friends gave a passing look of delighted admiration, and stole away as quietly as possible into the garden. Here Vincent found a whole fairyland that he had not yet discovered. The extensive conservatories were all illuminated, and presented the most charming scene of flowers and fragrant plants. Over the gardens, and around the tall clipped hedges of yew, box, and holly, glittered innumerable lamps—"a pleasant sunshine in those shady places." A fountain was playing and splashing its glittering waters musically into the marble basin; and here and there were seen wandering groups full of laughter, or some shadow-loving couples, the ladies with shawls thrown over their heads, betraying a preference for the labyrinthine hedges, and secluded walks.

Our three, too, avoided all these, and burying themselves in the centre of a tall wilderness

of laurels, waited awhile till the first active sound of supper energy was over. Then suddenly there burst forth a strange wild strain, which arrested on the instant the steps of the ramblers in the gardens, and brought them hurrying towards the spot. But Mr. Bathurst had foreseen this effect, and planted a number of servants to keep back the intruders. Weird and wonderful were the blended strains, and the next instant the windows of the supper-room were thrown open, and a crowd of curious heads were thrust forth to ascertain what this unheard-of serenade could be. As the singers proceeded, there were cries of "Bravo! bravo!" The singers seemed to take fresh courage, and their strain became more wild, more powerful, more extraordinary. It ceased, and an universal applause, and cries of "*Encore!*" were heard from all sides.

"What is it?" asked the clear voice of Pasta herself, in evident wonder. "It is very fine, and most peculiarly novel; and in what beautiful accord are those three voices—bass, tenor, and soprano! It is delicious!"

"It is an Arnaout war-song," said an officer. "I have heard the wild robber bands singing just such in the mountains of Delvinachi."

"*Encore! encore!*" shouted many voices; but there was a rush of several young men towards the bushes, and cries issued thence: "Back! back! or we cease!" "Back! back!" was re-echoed from the windows of the mansion, and the tenor voice, in a serio-comic recitative, chanted:

"Oh! rude satyrs haunt these woods!
Their savage hoofs tramp round!
Ye hornets! scour these solitudes,
Pursue them wolf and hound!"

"Back, satyrs!" again shouted the delighted company. "Back, satyrs! and confusion to them!"

There was a moment's silence, and once more the mingled voices were heard, but faint and low; then still soft, but growing more impassioned, plaintive, and deep; then they rose in wonderful strength of harmony, and seemed to float up skyward, full of the vehemence of tortured feeling, and almost of despair; then they dropped again into faint breathings of saddest regret; and then, gathering fresh strength, they seemed to pour themselves out in long and ardent yearnings of a for ever bereaved soul.

"What can that be?" exclaimed many voices; and another gentleman answered: "That is an Arabian lament of love. It brings back the days of my overland journey."

The applause was now immense, and cries of "More! more!" were reiterated. And shouts of "Bravo, Bathurst! bravo, Dorrington! bravo, bravo, Woodman!" showed that the real singers were discovered.

On this the bass voice, with a mimic note of terror, chanted:

"Oh! dark spirits haunt these woods!
They name themselves in glee.
Up! quit these haunted solitudes!
Singing Woodman, up and flee!"

Laughter and applause resounded from all quarters, and cries of "No! no! *encore! encore!*" And presently, once more the three voices were heard accompanied this time by a bass viol and a violin. The song and its accompaniments were grave and slow. They seemed to breathe dread and awe. You had a feeling of savage mountains and yawning chasms: of prostrate multitudes stretched around some terrible shrine. Then there arose wailing voices of supplication,

strong and imploring, then it became slow and awe-struck, till at once a strange burst of triumph and wild vehemence rose into the most unearthly symphony, the most frenzied chorus of agonized voices, into a pæan so solemn and terrible as to be fitted only for the fane of some stern divinity, and some creed of desolation.

"In the name of Heaven! what is that?" exclaimed the powerful voice of Pasta again. No one answered, no one had ever heard so fearfully sublime a music. There was a cry for more, but the next instant the three performers entered the room, and were received with the most stunning and long-continued plaudits.

"Why, Mr. Bathurst," said Pasta, "this I did not anticipate. It is worth coming all the way to hear! What a beautiful surprise!"

Elizabeth Arden glowing with delight, kissed Clara Woodman, and said:

"My dearest Clara, what a charming conception. What a new and unexpected feature given to the *fête*. But whatever was that last thing?"

"Oh!" said Bathurst, "that was not ours, that frightened us out of the bushes. That is a song of demon-worshippers in the mountains of Kurdestan. A real Yezidee delirium; I never

heard the like myself, except there. But don't let us talk of them, and in fact, I am ravenously hungry."

With this, there was a simultaneous recollection of suspended supper, and all addressed themselves again to the table. There was, however, a marvellous buzz of talk on this singular episode in the evening's pleasures. The three singers were at once quite the rage. No people run after a bran-new novelty like we dear English. The Elvastons were gone for the night to a neighbouring family; and a new and genial spirit was awoke through the whole party. Anon, numbers were running off to enjoy one more waltz, and to wind up with a jolly and grand Sir Roger de Coverley.

Bathurst and the illustrious singer, took a hurried leave, and drove rapidly off; the dawn already greeting them in the eastern sky, The crowds were sensibly diminishing; there was a constant sound of clapping of carriage-doors, and slapping together of steps, and of wheels rapidly rattling away.

Clara Woodman was taking leave of Elizabeth, duly wrapped in cloak and shawl, when another young lady came running, crying: "Clara! Clara! what *are* you doing? Everybody waits,

the carriage stops the way!" Clara darted away, casting a look full of a hundred meanings at Elizabeth and Vincent, who were now left standing together; and humming as she went:

"Singing Woodman, up and flee!"

There was a quick grasp of two affectionate hands—a quick exchange of a few affectionate words, and Vincent Dorrington, and the heroine of the evening were gone different ways. The great Arden *fête* was at an end.

CHAPTER XII.

When Vincent descended the next morning he found, instead of the crowd of last evening, a sort of family group at breakfast. Miss Nelly Arden occupied one end of the breakfast-table, and Elizabeth the other: Mr. Arden being seated near Mr. Canning, who occupied a seat on the right hand of Elizabeth, with whom he seemed to be very pleasantly chatting. As Vincent entered the room, this was the first thing which struck him. Canning seemed to have chosen his place as much to be able to command the view of the door, as to be near the intelligent and lovely heiress. As Vincent advanced into the room, he could very well

perceive that the Foreign Minister asked Elizabeth who he was, and Elizabeth, with a somewhat anxious look, gave her reply.

Mr. Arden had considerably thawed this morning, and returned Vincent's bow with a tolerably friendly, "How are you, Mr. Dorrington?" Miss Nelly smiled, and nodded kindly at him; and having returned these salutations, he proceeded to a vacant place by the side of Mr. Dewey, who had ridden over from Dalling, in order to secure a little more of Canning's company.

"Why, you vanished all at once, Mr. Dewey, last evening," said Vincent, as he took his seat.

"Yes, and you too, I hear, vanished into the thicket to some purpose. I am very much vexed that I missed those strange specimens of Eastern music and singing. They astonished everybody, even the great *cantatrice* herself, I hear. But I hope it is not the last of them that will be heard here."

"Whenever you can get Mr. Bathurst and Miss Woodman together again," Vincent replied, "I shall be most happy to bear my part."

"Mr. Dorrington, I think?" said Mr. Can-

ning, rising and stretching his hand across the table, which Vincent took with great respect. "I am happy to make your acquaintance. Mr. Bathurst wished to bring us together, but as I have not been too strong lately, I was gone to bed; but he left me a note which makes me quite glad to see you. You have travelled extensively, I hear."

"Yes," replied Vincent; "Mr. Bathurst and myself spent some two years in the East."

"Before which, I believe," continued the Foreign Minister, "you had already travelled for a good while?"

"I may rather say," observed Vincent, "had lived abroad, than travelled."

"You speak many languages?"

"Nearly all the European ones, and something of several Asiatic languages. Indeed I ought, for I lived altogether five years in foreign countries."

"And may I ask," said George Canning, "what was your particular object?"

"Simply," replied Vincent, "to make myself well, intimately acquainted with the different peoples, their languages, their institutions, their statistical condition, and their literature. It seems to me, that Englishmen, of all men, their

country being so intimately blended in relations with almost all people on the earth, should in early life, where they have opportunity, possess themselves of this knowledge."

"You are quite right," said Canning. "And you made yourself entirely at home amongst the people where you resided for the time, and studied everything about them?"

"Exactly," said Vincent, the whole table having now their attention fixed on his conversation. "I studied in their Universities, in their streets, in their lands, in their theatres, and in their saloons. I camped with or cabined with them, or palaced with them, just as opportunity offered; and I kept an eye open for opportunities. What I have learnt has shown, by the vulgar errors it has exploded in me, what real necessity there is for such study."

"You are quite right," again said Canning. "And you were in Turkey and Greece?"

"In both for some time."

"You think you understand their respective conditions and relations fully?"

"I feel that I do."

"Do you think Greece is in a fit condition for freedom?"

"By no means."

"Then you would not advocate the removal of the Turkish yoke?"

"By all means."

"How is that?" asked the Minister. "How am I to understand you?"

"Thus: Greece is neither fit for freedom, nor ever will be under the irritating, demoralizing, and pauperizing yoke of Turkey. Yet it is, and for this reason, high time to break that yoke, and to allow the Greek to commence a new career of civilization under the judicious guardianship and restraint of enlightened Europe."

"I see," said Canning. "I am glad we agree so entirely in this opinion. But do you know, Mr. Dorrington, that your knowledge—your sound practical knowledge—may just now be of great service to your country?"

"I shall be most happy," replied Vincent, modestly, "to render it so in any way that I can. Thinking so, I have arranged the joint travels and experience of Mr. Bathurst and myself for the press, and Mr. Bathurst has seen it printed."

"Is it out?" asked the Minister; "I must have the book at once. George," he said,

turning to his nephew, Lord George, "see that it is sent down from town at once. I wish I had it to-day, to read on my road returning."

"You can, Sir," replied Vincent; "Mr. Bathurst brought the first copy down with him last night. It is perfectly at your service."

"I shall be more obliged than you can imagine. It is precisely the thing I want at this moment."

"It shall be given to your valet immediately after breakfast.

"My very best thanks, Mr. Dorrington; but I trust you will employ your extraordinary knowledge in your country's service, by your living exertions as well as by your pen."

This conversation had made a far deeper impression on the listeners than Vincent himself was aware of. That the Foreign Minister should recommend him to devote his knowledge to the service of his country was tantamount, in the opinion of every one that heard it, to an invitation on his part, and a promise of a most flattering kind. A stout lady, who had last night cautioned her two long-legged sons against committing themselves with Mr. Dorrington, as he stood in hostile relations to the

Elvastons, now turned to the one sitting nearest to her, and said, in quite audible tones:

"Frederick, you must cultivate Mr. Dorrington's acquaintance; he will be a rising man, and may be of use to you."

"I shall be very glad, mother," replied the promising youth; "I thought him a very clever fellow from the first I saw of him. You must give me credit for penetration, at any rate."

Mr. Arden himself was touched with the same wonderful contagion, of a great man's notice; and he who petrified poor Vincent last night by his freezing nod, now said: "My friend, Mr. Vincent Dorrington, is certainly a very extraordinary young man, Mr. Canning."

Elizabeth, who had listened to Canning's conversation with Vincent with a swelling bosom, now blushed deeply and painfully.

But at this moment came the post; no doubt that for which Canning had been glancing rather anxiously towards the door. The servants brought in Mr. Arden's bag, well stuffed with letters, newspapers, and packets for himself and guests; and the bag of the Minister, of ample size, almost bursting with its contents.

This the valet bore away to the library, whither Canning and Lord George followed it without delay.

The remaining company were soon deeply absorbed by their letters and newspapers. Presently Lord George came out, and addressing Vincent, said:

"Mr. Canning would feel obliged if you could give him a few minutes in the library."

Vincent rose at once, and accompanied him.

"Your friend is a made man, Miss Nelly," observed the same stout lady oracularly. "He is a man evidently of great talents."

"We have discovered that a good while ago," drily observed Nelly.

But now came Mr. Canning himself, with a quantity of newspapers in his hands.

"Ah! Mr. Dewey," said he, "here are some things which will please you. I have not said a word of it to your friend, Mr. Dorrington, for he is helping Lord George with a rather tough matter, and it might distract his attention."

He handed him the papers, and withdrew again.

Mr. Dewey glanced over the first paper. A flush of pleasure and surprise was seen on his

face by the quick eyes of Miss Nelly and Elizabeth, the latter of whom was also running through another paper rapidly.

"Ay, but this is magnificent! Hear this," said Mr. Dewey—"this is the *Times*:—

"'We are about to present to our readers some ample extracts from two of the most remarkable, and we may add important, volumes of travels which have appeared for many years. They are the result of years of careful and of adventurous research, by two young Englishmen of good family, into regions now but little traversed, and yet with which circumstances every day appear to be marking the importance of all fuller acquaintance. They embrace a wide range of Eastern Europe, and of Western and Central Asia. Our extracts will be selected with reference to interests which just now are vitally important to this country; but we may pronounce generally, that Mr. Dorrington, the gentleman who records these travels, displays the rarely associated qualities of a true poet, and a sagacious and far-seeing statesman. We are at a loss whether we shall more admire the pure eloquence of the style, the vast and solid information gathered and here lucidly detailed, or the unmistakeable indications of those broad views

and masculine powers of analysis and deduction which belong to the able legislator. Those at the head of our affairs, and the whole British public equally, will do well to make themselves masters without delay of what relates to Turkey and Greece in these volumes. They are like a revelation for the moment sent to settle the destinies of thousands, and decide things which are of the most solemn interest to the fame of this country.' "

"That is magnificent praise," said Mr. Dewey, looking along the table with an air of genuine pleasure.

"Did I not say," observed the stout lady who had given just before the wise counsel to her son, "did I not say that Mr. Dorrington is destined to become a great man? Fred, you must cultivate Mr. Dorrington's acquaintance immediately."

"Oh, how I do long to see Mr. Dorrington's work," said a young lady: "I dare say we shall find something about those demon-worshippers who have such dreadfully fine music."

"I wonder whether he would write in my album," said another.

"Well, really," said Mr. Arden, "Mr. Vincent Dorrington is very clever."

"Which," reiterated Miss Nelly, "we knew very well, brother, long ago."

"Oh! there is a great deal more of the like high praise in all these papers," added Mr. Dewey. "I am quite impatient to congratulate Mr. Vincent."

Elizabeth, with a heart too full of triumphant pleasure to be safely trusted any longer, rose and withdrew with as unconcerned an air as she could. She longed to rush to Vincent, and rejoice with all her soul in his grand success; but as she could not do that, she hastened to her own room to shed a few secret tears of pleasure; but there she found a copy of "The Travels of Two Friends," on her toilet table, and was speedily deep in their pages, and in scenes of Eastern beauty, which Vincent had given her brilliant glimpses of during their rides about Naples.

From this delicious entrancement she was at length hastily called away. Canning was going. She rose, and found him already about to step into the carriage which was to convey him and his nephew, Lord George, that day to Welbeck Abbey. All the family and its remaining guests were crowding round to take leave of the great Minister. He shook hands most cordially with Elizabeth, and said with a tone and look which

showed that his penetrating eye had discerned one truth deeply interesting to her:

"I am carrying him off for an hour's ride with us—our common and *un*common friend, Mr. Dorrington; but I shall be sure to send him back. May God bless you!"

The last words were pronounced in a lower tone, but with an emphasis and feeling that flashed their meaning so visibly on Elizabeth, that she blushed rosy red, kissed the departing statesman's hand with tears in her eyes, and as his carriage wheels ground along the gravel, once more escaped to her chamber.

Here Nelly Arden followed her for a moment, clasped her affectionately in her arms, and giving air to her pent-up breast, exclaimed:

"Is it not glorious? Is it not delightful, this proud success of Vincent's? It is quite ridiculous to see what a great man he has all at once grown in people's eyes, from the marked notice of Canning, and from this literary success upon its heels. But it is only the first-fruits, my dear Elizabeth. Bright days are in store for us, though to-day, and I am loath to remind you of it, we shall need all innate sources of support that we can get. Those odious Elvastons will be here to luncheon.

Strengthen yourself, dear child, for your trial. Remember God, and I, poor creature as I am, will stand by you through all."

Elizabeth leaned her head against her aunt, and threw her arms round her.

"And poor Vincent!" continued Nelly Arden. Elizabeth raised her head, and gazed at her with eyes full of inquiry. "Poor Vincent! he was almost beside himself that he could not tell you before he went, how profoundly he sympathizes with you in your coming trial; how wholly he shall be with you in spirit. But all eyes are upon him, and it was good that he should go with Mr. Canning a few miles. Depend upon it, it will have substantial consequences. I have promised Vincent that we will let him know the moment the explanation is over. But now, dear child, I must descend. God bless you! Don't be long before you come down too."

Elizabeth, laying aside reluctantly Vincent's volumes, prepared herself for the dreaded interview which was approaching, by a few attentions to her toilet, and by an earnest inward prayer to God for strength and wisdom. The hour drew near.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Elvastons appeared punctually at Arden Lodge in time for luncheon. The Earl and Countess, Lord Chellaston and his two sisters, were all there. During luncheon there was an attempt to be agreeable and conversive, but it failed. There was a weight on the mind—a critical moment before the members of the two families, and the result was a terrible constraint. All other guests had departed; and the moment luncheon was over, the parties most intimately concerned withdrew without any observation, and soon after Elizabeth and her aunt entered the library where Mr. Arden and Lord Chellaston were awaiting them.

Lord Chellaston advanced to meet Elizabeth, and handed her to a chair. Her aunt took her seat by her side: Mr. Arden sate opposite, at some distance; and Lord Chellaston standing near Elizabeth, said with much politeness, and with more ease than most men could have evinced under the circumstances:

"Miss Arden, I believe it is for me to ask of you to pronounce that sentence now, which you have had a year to reflect on, and which is of such infinite moment to us all—to yourself and me especially. I trust that from the friendliness we have all along maintained, the decision cannot be other than what I most anxiously desire and which I believe would be of such real advantage to us both."

He was silent, and Mr. Arden said, in a tone of much confidence:

"Oh certainly, Elizabeth cannot for a moment entertain any other idea."

The paleness which had marked Elizabeth, and which now deepened visibly, the colour forsaking her lips, and a trembling manifesting itself perceptibly through her whole frame, were not very promising auguries of so satisfactory an answer. The anxious face and downcast eyes of her aunt gave no more cheering testi-

mony to the hope of such an issue. Elizabeth was silent for a moment, and then said, in a low, soft, but distinct tone:

"My Lord, and my dearest father, I have anxiously and conscientiously considered the proposal made to me. I thank you both most sincerely for the patience you have had with me, and for the strict and delicate adherence to the terms of our agreement. I wish I could say that I have found reason to alter my opinion of this very serious question, but I cannot. I feel myself utterly unable to accept the brilliant offer which your Lordship has so flatteringly made me."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Arden, "do I understand you, Elizabeth? do you decline to accede to our wishes?"

"Dearest father, I wish it were otherwise, but I do."

"You do? You are so absurd as to decline the alliance of Lord Chellaston, and the House of Elvaston?"

Elizabeth was silent.

"Perhaps," said Lord Chellaston, "Miss Arden will assign some reason for this, I must say, to me unexpected and grievous announcement."

"Excuse me, Lord Chellaston. I desire to assign no further reason than this, that I feel myself quite unsuitable to your Lordship, and that I could not make you happy."

"Stuff!" said Mr. Arden; "if Lord Chellaston does not think you unsuitable, and is willing to take you, why should you object?"

"If you have any faults to find with me—if there be anything that you object to, and you would be kind enough to state it, perhaps we might understand each other better, and these objections might be removed."

"You must pardon me, my Lord, I make no complaints of you; I have no objections to state. I have stated all that I can do in a case like this, which affects the happiness of us both. I feel my utter unfitness to enter into the arrangement, and I beg to be excused."

"Do you mean to drive me mad, Elizabeth?" exclaimed Mr. Arden, with all the signs of intense anger. "Do you know that I have pledged my honour on this subject to Lord Chellaston, to the Earl of Elvaston, and to the whole family? Are you aware that all the world knows that this is the case? And do you coolly propose to make us all ridiculous?"

"My dear father," said Elizabeth, greatly agi-

tated, "you cannot have promised, except conditionally, or why need we have waited? No, no, neither Lord Chellaston nor his father will expect such a thing. They understand it perfectly. I appeal to you, my Lord, whether it be not so?"

"Well," said Lord Chellaston, in a tone of deep mortification, seeking to conceal itself under an air of candour, "I cannot say that *you* have exactly promised anything but seriously to consider it; but then your great cheerfulness and contentment under the prospect of this issue, as we have always understood; your maintaining the whole term of trial, and the assurance of Mr. Arden, have led us confidently to calculate on your consent. We have thought of nothing else; we have had no cause to anticipate anything else."

"Certainly," said Mr. Arden; "your conduct, Elizabeth, has given me every warrant to believe you satisfied. Have you been dissembling? What am I to think of your apparent happiness under a prospect which involved either your reluctant consent to this alliance, or my deep and most painful disappointment? How could you be so content?"

"Because, dearest father, I relied so entirely

on your goodness—on your reasonableness—on that tenderness to me, which has made my whole life so happy, and for which I owe you such a debt of grateful affection."

"Grateful affection! Do you talk of grateful affection at the very moment that you are blasting all my fondest wishes, and prostrating my honour in the dust?"

"Yes, dear father, the deepest, the most loving, the most inextinguishable affection. Ask me to make any sacrifice, but do not, and you cannot, ask me to make myself miserable for ever, and to abandon all self-respect by becoming the mere creature of a sordid contract. You have made me hitherto the happiest of creatures; you have no one but me; I will not believe that you will desire to destroy the peace and eternal hope of your only child."

"Pshah! trash! sentimentalism!" cried the exasperated father. "I seek your honour and your happiness at the same time. Let us hear no more. You have had your time; I expect you now to accept the hand of Lord Chellaston."

Elizabeth sate pale and motionless. Miss Nelly Arden looked flushed. Her eyes were fixed with earnest tenderness on Elizabeth,

except when for a moment she turned and flashed intensest indignation on her brother.

"Miss Arden," said Lord Chellaston, "the decided repugnance you evince towards me, I must confess wounds my self-love excessively. I did not think I had been so repulsive a person."

"Pardon me, my Lord," replied Elizabeth; "I have said that I find no fault with you. I will say more: your Lordship has those attractions, both personal and of station, which will win you the favour of women far more distinguished by nature and by rank than myself. You may choose from the highest and the loveliest of this land. My feelings are no tests of your peculiar merits. But in all these things there are such things as fancies and fitnesses. I rest my reluctance to this alliance on my own unfitness; but on that I stand firm."

"Perhaps now, Miss Arden," said Lord Chellaston, with a peculiar and bitter smile, "I understand you better. You talk of fancies; may I ask whether some other person more to your fancy has not possession of your heart? If so, there is little hope of agreement."

"I must decline," said Elizabeth, with dignity, "any further interrogation. I have answered the

only question between us. You will see, my Lord, the propriety of our closing this painful scene."

"No, my Lord," cried Mr. Arden, now excited to that pitch when the father appears passing into the tyrant, and becomes unfeeling and insensible; "I expect my daughter to recollect herself, and what she owes to me. I expect her to comply with my wishes."

"Allow me," said Lord Chellaston, "to introduce my father and mother a moment. I should like them to know precisely how this affair stands. Perhaps their representations may be more prevailing than mine."

Elizabeth would have protested against this unnecessary infliction, but his Lordship was gone, and in the next moment returned, followed by Lord and Lady Elvaston. All rose in profound silence, and on the Earl and Countess being seated, Lord Chellaston observed to them:

"I regret to say, that we have not met with a happy issue here. Miss Arden declines the alliance."

"Declines!" exclaimed both Lord and Lady Elvaston, in one breath.

"Declines!" continued Lord Elvaston. "Good heavens! upon what plea? Why, Mr. Arden,

I have always understood the thing as perfectly settled, or I should not have been here at this moment."

"Oh, certainly! my dear Miss Arden," said Lady Elvaston, with great dignity and astonishment. "The affair is quite settled; quite settled. Everybody looks upon it as such. Your father has assured us so, we have assured all our friends so; and all the world regards it as a fixed and decided affair! It is impossible without the most indescribable ridicule to go back now. Oh! no, no! such a thing is not to be thought of. Why should it? You cannot object to my son; you cannot object to his rank and fortune; what in the world *can* you object to?"

"Miss Arden talks of fancies," said Lord Chellaston, sarcastically.

"Fancies!" ejaculated Lady Elvaston. "Ha! ha! that is really too absurd."

"Fancies!" exclaimed Lord Elvaston, with an air of astonished pride. "My dear Madam, this is not a time or an occasion to talk of fancies. This is a most solemn and important matter. And I beg to say, that I cannot for a moment allow my dignity, or that of my son to be thus trifled with. Mr. Arden, I rely on you to settle all this."

Mr. Arden was about to speak, but Lord Chellaston interposed:

"But, my Lord, what will you do when there is another lover in the case?"

"Another lover! what other lover? Does Miss Arden mean to say that she has been indulging in treachery? that she has been playing tricks upon us?"

"If she has," said Mr. Arden, with a voice full of wrath, "I will renounce her; I will refuse to acknowledge her as child of mine."

"You do not mean," said Lady Elvaston, looking with a cold and scrutinizing stare on Elizabeth, yet addressing herself to her son, "you do not mean that there is any truth in that silly story of that Mr. Dorrington?"

"I mean that," said Lord Chellaston, in whom now the devil of pique was fast expelling all plausible policy.

"Ridiculous!" ejaculated Lady Elvaston. "The heir of an earldom! refused you for a mere younger son of a mere country gentleman —for a mere adventurer—a knight-errant—a Don Quixote—a mere literary man! Ha! ha! it is too ridiculous. You make me laugh when I ought to be very angry. No!" she said, assuming an air of incredulous gravity, "you

do no not mean any such thing, dear Miss Arden. You cannot. You will reflect better upon it. You are too sensible—too much a woman of the world."

"Lady Elvaston!" said Elizabeth, still pale, but now firm and full of dignity, for the allusions to Vincent had roused all her pride. "A woman of the world I trust I never shall be; but in the choice of a husband, I trust that I have sound discretion and sense of propriety sufficient to guide me in so serious a business. I have explained myself to the only persons personally concerned in this matter, and I would be spared further discussion upon it. I am resolved, whenever I choose a husband, really to choose him—not to have one imposed—be he whom he may; and I am woman enough not to be turned by any persuasions, much less by sarcasm."

This decisive declaration had the effect of an electric shock. The Elvastons seemed petrified, and were silent, but looking daggers. At length, said Lady Elvaston, turning to Miss Nelly Arden, in a cool and somewhat taunting tone:

"And do you, Madam, approve of these

sentiments in your niece? Do you favour this Mr. Dorrington?"

Miss Nelly had been for some time at the boiling-point. She had practised the greatest extent of self-restraint which she had exhibited through the whole course of her life, anxious not to injure the position of her niece with her father; but this was too much for her; she answered instanter:

"With all my heart, Lady Elvaston—with all my heart and soul. And Mr. Dorrington—do I approve of him? I answer again, with all my heart, with all my soul. Never did I see a man that I more approved, or that I more admired."

Mr. Arden sate fixed to his chair in paralyzing astonishment and indignation. The Elvastons rose simultaneously.

"That is quite sufficient," said Lord Elvaston, in a haughty tone. The whole three bowed with all the solemn stiffness of deeply wounded dignity, and withdrew. There was immediately a great running and bustle heard in the house, and before a quarter of an hour was past, the Elvaston carriage drove rapidly away, with all its horses, its rich emblazonments, its gorgeously liveried servants, and its four indignant

insides; Lord Chellaston taking his stately departure on horseback.

But long before this the fury of Mr. Arden's wrath had broken loose. Launching the bitterest, and the most unbridled expressions of his anger against his sister for her encouragement of her niece in this system of what he termed folly and disobedience, he declared that if Elizabeth did not at once renounce the idea of Mr. Dorrington, recant her rejection of Lord Chellaston, and thus enable himself to retrieve his honour with that noble family and the world, he would renounce her for ever, and disinherit her on the spot.

Elizabeth, to whom anything like contention was a new and terrible feeling, who had lived the object of the tenderest care, and had never known occasion to resist her father's will, was torn with anguish at this scene of violent passion. She felt as if something unholy had fallen upon them—as if the solid earth were giving way beneath her feet. She had determined to bear with patience what might come; but she had not realized to her feelings anything so cruel and appalling as this. She sprang to her father, and with her habitual confidence of affection, flung her arms about his neck, and

implored him to forgive her, to dismiss his anger, which was to her fearful, and lacerated her very heart. But he pushed her rudely from him, and bade her obey if she meant to be forgiven. This was so strange, and so dreadful, that she felt crushed as by a blow upon the naked heart. The next moment, pale as death, and with agony depicted on her corpselike features, she fell at his feet, held up her clenched and convulsively united hands, and entreated him to hear her—to take pity on her.

"Father! father!" she said, "I cannot marry Lord Chellaston; but in all else—in everything on earth—I can and will obey you. I love Vincent Dorrington—love him as my life, as my own soul; but never, even to him, will I give my hand without your consent. Let me be again your daughter, your own loving, devoted daughter. Let me live with you, and for you—be all to you that I have been; I ask no more. But oh! this dreadful anger! let it pass, dearest father, it is terrible to me—it kills me. I cannot bear it. Let me be your own, your humble, loving child—that is all I ask. We have enough, why should we want more? I ask no honour but that of living your own devoted daughter."

"There is a short way to forgiveness," said the exasperated man; "say you comply—that my honour shall be retrieved, and all will be forgotten."

Elizabeth writhed in speechless anguish; the perspiration stood thick upon her marble-cold brow; she wrung her clasped hands, but she said faintly and falteringly:

"I cannot! I cannot!"

"Then you are no longer child of mine. I renounce you!" said the implacable father.

"Shame, brother, shame!" said Miss Nelly. "Is it thus you treat your Angela's child! Is this your love, your pride in her? Oh! as your dear departed wife looks down from heaven upon you, how she must weep for you! Shame, brother! no child of yours! Then she is my child—mine! I will take her, and cherish her as she deserves. She shall be mine! You are unworthy of such a blessing! But she will die! You have killed her!"

Elizabeth had sunk insensible on the spot where she was kneeling, and the distracted aunt, clasping her in her arms, bore her to a sofa, knelt down, and wept tears of passionate grief over her. But the insensible father, rendered

insensible by wounded pride and passion—the father who had just expended on the celebration of her majority a whole year's income, withdrew pitilessly from the scene.

When Elizabeth recovered her consciousness, and flinging her arms around her aunt's neck, had wept long and silently, she at length looked with a look of unutterable misery into her aunt's face, and said:

"Aunt, will my father hate me? Will he never, never forgive? If so, better were it that I were dead!"

"Oh!" said Nelly Arden, "he will forgive, my precious—he will forgive in a while. What else should he do? He has no one but you. He will soon feel it and relent; but for the present, my darling, we had better go to my house—we shall only add fire to his anger here."

"Go!" exclaimed Elizabeth, rising up in tears. "Go! quit this dear house?—my life-long home?—my mother's home? Does my father wish it? I did not dream of that! That is a misery beyond my imagination."

She sate gazing into vacancy, and lost in the new and crushing idea.

"It is sad, my darling," said Aunt Nelly, kissing her cheek, "but it is only for the moment, and as your father commands—"

"Did he command it?"

"Yes; but it is only while the anger is upon him. Let us obey him, dear child—you promised you would, and all will be well in a day or two."

"Be it so, then," said Elizabeth, looking round the library as if she was actually taking a last look of it: "let us go, if it is for the best."

Nelly Arden rung the bell and went out, that the servant might not see Elizabeth in her extreme distress. She ordered her carriage as quickly as possible; and saying that Miss Arden was taken suddenly unwell, and she would have her at home to nurse her, she fetched her bonnet and cloak, and ordered Elizabeth's maid to come on in the afternoon with some clothes and other things for Miss Arden. Elizabeth, taking her arm, called up all her energy to walk to the carriage, surrounded by the sympathizing looks of the whole body of servants. That Miss Arden was ill, they saw too clearly, but the cause had not escaped them. The sudden and excited de-

parture of the Elvastons, the unconcealed anger of Mr. Arden, and the angry voices which had resounded in the library, left no mystery whatever in the minds of the sharp and inquisitive retainers.

CHAPTER XIV.

No sooner had Nelly Arden seen her beloved niece in her own house at Dalling, than she ordered her coachman to drive at once to Westwood, and request Mr. Vincent Dorrington to return in the carriage without delay. The man executed his mission much sooner than either himself or his mistress anticipated.

There was a gate opening into Arden Park from the beech woods on the road to Arden Lodge, and which road was also the nearest for the privileged few of Dalling towards Westwood. This gate was one which seemed to have been made by the united efforts of man and nature for the trysting place of rural lovers.

On each side of the gate grew a massive lime-tree, which hid its stem in a multitude of leafy shoots, and the two united themselves above the gate in a sort of natural Gothic arch. Their thick boughs spread themselves far round, like one great tent, beneath which you might have taken secure shelter from the rain for hours. Approaching from the park, a pleasant gloom of the wood saluted you, and you saw the lofty and columnar stems of the beeches rising in graceful dignity on each side of the well-kept drive. Approaching from the woods, you looked out over the gate on a landscape of peculiar beauty. The rich swells of the park; the fine old trees scattered in clumps and in single ones; the deer grazing in their glades; and in another direction the eye roved over upland fields where, in summer, the rich expanses of corn, or, in autumn, the rustic groups engaged in cutting it down, were pleasant objects of the scene. There was a peace—a solemn calm—a poetical feeling about this spot which had often struck Vincent. He had gone far with George Canning in the morning, and returning excited and restless, had wandered on as far as he dared venture towards Arden. He felt sure that if the

interview terminated without much anger, it would soon be over. He was all anxiety to receive the promised message. The longer delayed, the more he dreaded it. He was leaning over the gate, looking towards Arden Lodge, ready to avoid any one thence, except the servant of Miss Nelly, when he saw her carriage rapidly approaching. He hastened on to meet it, and the man drawing up at his approach, communicated his message, and in ten minutes Vincent was at Nelly Arden's.

He found Elizabeth lying on the sofa, pale and exhausted. The dreadful scene she had just passed through had left her weak as a child, and a heavy sense of trouble now lay on her heart. It was so strange, so inconceivable, so agonizing to thus have fallen under the bitter resentment of her father. Her affectionate aunt sate with her arms clasped round her, and using all her eloquence to assure her that this estrangement could not last. As Vincent entered the room, Elizabeth sprang up in the impulse of her agitated feelings, and as if misfortune had placed them beyond the coyness of an early passion, sunk into his arms, and wept sorrowfully on his breast.

Vincent was shocked at the change which a

few hours of wretchedness had made in her. He sate down by her on the sofa, and endeavoured to comfort her. He said the very same things which her aunt had said: that this anger of her father could not last—it was not natural—it was not probable.

"Ah, my Vincent!" said Elizabeth, looking sorrowfully in his face, "I thought I should have gone through the trial like a heroine. But I did not know how terrible is the anger of a parent. It is too dreadful to remember. But I am no longer the heiress of Arden, Vincent; I am a poor, renounced, disinherited maiden. I have nothing but your love and that of my aunt."

"All the welcomer to my heart, were it so," said Vincent, clasping her to his bosom; "but it is not, cannot be so. It were unnatural, monstrous—it is impossible. A few days at farthest, and your father's heart will yearn again for you."

Elizabeth shook her head. "I implored him," she said, "by my mother's memory, by everything dear to him; I have promised everything, except to marry Lord Chellaston, even to live without you, Vincent, till he shall give his free consent; but he has spurned me

from him, he has driven me from his house. He admits but one condition to his forgiveness —the one impossible."

"But that must be so," said Vincent, earnestly, "while your father is in the first violence of his anger. Rest calmly, my Elizabeth, put forth your strong sense and your patience; bear for a few days, if needful, and all will, I am confident, be right. And I must ask you to do it for my sake. For I too, Elizabeth, may have to add another pain to that which now oppresses you."

"What is that?" asked she, in alarm.

"I must probably leave you—leave you in this your first great sorrow."

"You must leave me?"

"Yes, dearest, for a short time probably. Hear me. This morning I went, as you know, with Canning. Before he had got past the front of Arden Lodge he took up one of my volumes, and was soon deeply absorbed in its pages. I saw him take a knife from amongst some papers, and cut page after page with incredible rapidity. I rode on, naturally anxious to know what was the impression my views gave him. He read on and on. We had left the park far behind. Lord George was deep in

the other volume. I heard several times that they addressed a few short words to each other. Anon the carriage stopped. 'Mr. Dorrington, Lord George will ride your horse awhile,' said the Minister, 'be so good as to come into the carriage.' I did so. We drove on.

"'My young friend,' said Mr. Canning, looking kindly but gravely at me, 'your work is the great trumpet-strain to the conflict of the hour. You have said all that I have conceived; you have confirmed all that I have determined upon. Greece must be saved! As I read your eloquent descriptions of the miseries of the Greek people, of the atrocities and indignities perpetrated upon them; all my young enthusiasm for that wonderful nation, that glorious fountain of all our arts, and much of our civilization; that inspirer of our liberties, and of the deathless efforts of our great minds in every age, revives within me. Greece must be saved—liberated—renewed.

"'But,' continued he, 'I am not what I was.' There was a sad, solemn, but beautiful expression passed over his fine, but languid countenance—an expression seen in the midst of his more noble and patriotic moments of parliamentary eloquence—an expression in which

the keen, caustic essence of the wit and satirist was gone, and in which the pride of talent was mingled with the loftiest feelings of the soul. 'The conflict of party has destroyed me. The vindictive and relentless passions which pursue the statesman, and pre-eminently such as have risen from the crowd in this country, have lacerated my heart, and are fast undermining my strength.

"'I speak not from the melancholy of nervous weakness. My friend, I feel the shadow of the grave come ever and anon across my soul. I shall die as so many statesman have died—early. But this all the more stimulates me to do one great deed while it is possible for me. *This* work I must not leave undone. My earliest passion was for liberty. It was kindled at the eternal flame of the Grecian altar. Perhaps in the strife for distinction, in a desire to be too exclusively British, I may have done and advocated what I would not now do and advocate. But I have had growing desires of a more generous, a more expanded policy. I have had views of a glory that dawns upon me, as the spring dawns upon the dying man, so sublime, so exquisite, that I would give all that I have done and won for one single year of it.

"'To unloose the wings of Commerce, and let them waft their myriad blessings through this glorious earth of God. To tread down with the giant might of England the oppressors and destroyers of liberty and soul throughout the world. To raise the suffering nations, and enable the genius which has been dragged weeping through the mire of centuries, by tyrants and the slaves of tyrants, till it has ceased to recognise its origin and its birthright, again to assert its immortal ancestry, and the diviner heritage of the ages to come.

"'That is now my dream—that has been my hope. But the enemies are strong. One great spirit—that of the poet of "Childe Harold"—has laid down his life in the cause of Greece.

"The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might yet be free."

"'You have quoted the words, Mr. Dorrington; you have illustrated them with the fire of a noble heart and a gifted intellect. It is a glorious dream; yet it is still only a dream. The enemies are many, strong as evil, and crue as death. I feel their arrows in my bosom now.

But the battle must be fought and won, one day, if not by me. We must gird up our loins, and gather together all our forces; and God will give fresh blood, fresh strength for the combat. I look upon it as a providence, Mr. Dorrington, that I have thus met with you. You are evidently one of those ever fresh-springing warriors that the God of liberty is raising up. You will do his work. You will dedicate yourself to it, body and soul, will you not?'

"I was carried away by his earnest and inspired words. I said with sudden enthusiasm: 'So help me God!'

"'You have sworn it,' he said: 'it is well. I have seen clearly your nature: you will keep your vow; it is a high, it is a holy one. In a few days, perhaps,' he continued, 'I shall summon you to town. We must make all the preparation for this conflict that we can. You must have a borough, and during the recess you must join the great leaders of the movement in London. They will receive you with open arms. Your work will prepare them for it. You must proclaim your views and your convictions, drawn, as they are, from the most ample and careful experience, by your voice as you have by your pen. We must rouse the people to support us,

and you will thus prepare yourself for the battle we must fight in Parliament, and for which we must muster every possible force.'"

As Vincent spoke thus, Elizabeth Arden seemed to forget her own sorrow, to rise above her weakness. She kindled into an enthusiasm like his own: her face, still pale, but animated by a noble feeling, became more lovely; her large, dark eyes sparkled with a joy that blazed up above all her sadness; and Vincent saw her, like the reflection of his own ardent soul, beautified and etherialized.

"You go, Vincent," she said, as he concluded, "to a splendid career. It gives me no pain: it will strengthen and support me. We shall hear from you often—daily, I hope. We shall live in that hope. We shall share all your triumphs for God and humanity. Oh! when my father sees your great success, as he will see it, and soon, he must forgive all; he must love and admire you as we do; your fame will heal all our wounds. Ah! how often in young girlish years I have indulged such dreams, and longed that I were a man; but now, through you I shall realize them. You are my warrior, Vincent, my right arm. I will aid, encourage you; solace you in your difficult moments;

and you shall make my glory and my happiness."

In a very few days Vincent's expectation was verified. He was summoned to town. There he found that everything was prepared. The Chiltern Hundreds were accepted by a supporter of the Government, secure of another constituency, and Vincent was duly installed as the representative of a Government borough. There remained nothing but for him, on the meeting of Parliament, formally to take his seat.

In town, both by the popular party and in the literary and social circles, he found himself received with open arms. His new work had acquired a popularity unexampled. The strong public feeling with regard to Greece, gave it an extraordinary circulation. He was astonished at the caresses and flatteries that he everywhere received. He attended public meetings for the purpose of strengthening the hands of Government in its liberal foreign policy; and the effect which he produced was such as to give the most sanguine expectations regarding his *début* in Parliament. His speeches were read all over the country with singular avidity, uniting as they did such an amount of novel information, and such eloquent vigour.

They came down to Westwood, and were perused with pride by his parents. His father began to look with the most unfeigned favour on all that Vincent did. To have at one spring placed himself in Parliament, in favour with the Government, and in equal popularity with the people, were circumstances too flattering to be contemplated by Mr. Dorrington with anything but pride and proud auguries for the future. As for Jeremiah Gould and Farmer Greatorex, they set Vincent down for nothing less in a few years than Prime Minister, and perhaps something more. They saw as clearly as friendly eyes can, another Canning in their young friend.

Meantime things did not progress quite so auspiciously at Dalling and Arden Lodge. Mr. Arden, wounded inconceivably in his pride, for he had set his heart on seeing his daughter a Countess; and advised by some of his county friends—for, as we have said, it was his nature to lean on somebody—remained immovable to all the entreaties of his sister and Elizabeth. Through Mrs. George Arden of Dalling, they continued to send messages of affection, and to sound the tone of his feelings. He had but one answer—obedience and forgiveness. "Enable me to

retrieve my honour," was his message on all such occasions to his daughter, "and my arms are open." Whether to strike terror into what he regarded as his disobedient child, or whether his resentment could have reached such a pitch of hardness, they learnt through Mrs. George Arden, that he had actually proceeded to fulfil his threat, and had caused a new will to be drawn by his solicitor, cutting off Elizabeth, and leaving his whole estate to his nephew Charles. Having done this, he had set off down to his estate in Kent, and intimated that he should spend the winter there and in town.

We need not attempt to describe the effect of this unkindness and estrangement on the affectionate heart of Elizabeth. She sorrowed deeply, but remained, as was only possible for her, firm to her sense of duty to her womanhood and her own soul. The proud progress of Vincent, and his daily letters, with much news and many kind messages from his friend Bathurst, were her strongest support, and the ground of a brighter hope. Often did Mrs. Dorrington visit her at Dalling, and often might she and her aunt be found at the Dene, where no one was more charmed with Elizabeth's society than Mr. Dorrington.

But matters rushed on to a crisis more speedy and agitating than could have been foreseen. The two political parties in the country were making the most stupendous exertions to damage and defeat each other. The thorough old Conservative party, whose chief strength lay in the country, were roused by the prospect of success to Canning's foreign policy to a condition bordering on madness. Great gatherings took place all over the country to drive the Foreign Minister from office, and thus annihilate his plans which were denounced as destructive to the constitution. One of these gatherings was to take place immediately for the Midland Counties, and in the neighbouring county-town. Mr. Arden came hastily to Arden Lodge for a few days, in order to attend it. Both Elizabeth and her aunt sent immediate messages of love, and begged to come and welcome him home. The same stern answer struck fresh sorrow to their hearts.

The day came for the great party meeting. All the leaders of the stanch, unbending school of politicians—lords, and dukes, and gentlemen of all ranks—mustered strong at the County-Hall. The speeches were of the most desperate and envenomed kind. Nor was the spirit out

of doors less embittered. The people, who regarded these stereotyped aristocrats as the authors of all dearness, of all depression of trade, and, in short, of all their miseries, assembled in thousands and tens of thousands. The different noblemen and gentlemen, as they drove in to the meeting, were received with groans and howls. The crowd around the Town-Hall during the progress of the meeting was dense and furious. The most terrific yells assailed the ears of the assembled aristocracy, and often drowned the voices of the speakers.

When the meeting closed, there was a determined attempt to assail and take vengeance on those who had attended it. It was only by the aid of a party of soldiery, which had been kept in readiness for the purpose, that these noblemen and gentlemen were enabled to make their way to their hotels, where many of them felt it safest to remain all night. Others, in the outskirts of the town, had their carriages attacked. Bricks, stones, and cudgels, battered in the windows, and many of the obnoxious nobility and gentry received severe injuries, and only escaped with their lives by the speed of their horses, and the spirit of their coachmen.

Mr. Arden found himself in the midst of an

infuriated mob. The yells on all sides were terrific. Stones passed through his carriage windows; others struck his coachman, who, probably irritated by the insult, drove furiously, as if he would drive over the raging assailants. The uproar and confusion became awful. His horses, particularly spirited and powerful ones, became unmanageable. They flew along at a fearful rate, and by their formidable fury cleared the way of the people; but growing more maddened as they proceeded, and by the yellings which were now behind them, they ran with a frightful impetuosity, and passing over a bridge a little beyond the town, the carriage struck with stunning violence against the wall.

There was a momentary check; but the carriage appearing not to be disabled, nor being overturned, the driver continued his way, and never drew up till he reached the lodge-gates of Arden, seven miles from the town.

Here the lodge-keeper, seeing the shattered condition of the carriage, and its broken windows, looked in to inquire after the safety of Mr. Arden, when he saw him lying forward in the carriage bottom, on his knees, his head, face downwards, on the front seat.

He gave the alarm; the coachman and valet

descended in haste, and to their consternation it was discovered that their master was insensible, if not dead. No time was lost in reaching the hall. A man was dispatched at full speed to Dalling, for the doctor. Mr. Arden was carried in, and laid on the sofa. Here it was discovered that his hat was crushed upon his head, and blood was upon his face. The consternation was indescribable. To all appearance he was dead.

The doctor arrived in an almost incredibly short time. He found a severe bruise upon the head, but whether it had been caused by a stone, or by Mr. Arden's having fallen forward in the shock of the collision with the bridge, could not be ascertained. The surgeon pronounced that life was still in him, but that the case was one in which very little hope could be entertained. He tried to bleed him in the arm, but no blood followed the lancet. He shook his head, and looked very grave. He then ordered leeches, which he had brought, to be immediately and plentifully applied to the head, and that as speedily as possible he should be got into a warm bath.

He next desired that Mr. Dewey should be summoned in case the patient should recover consciousness; and that his daughter and sister, as well as Mrs. George Arden and her son,

should be made acquainted, but in the most careful manner, with the accident.

The leeches bled well, the warm bath produced so much effect that Mr. Arden sighed several times while in it; but a deep stupor bound his senses, and thus he was laid in his bed. Meantime the surgeon had sent a man with a carriage, in all haste, to the county-town, to summon the most eminent physician there. Presently a carriage was heard approaching, and Mr. Dewey, accompanied by the distracted relatives from Dalling, was announced. The surgeon descended to them. We will not attempt to describe the overwhelming tears and grief of Elizabeth, and indeed of all the near relatives. Elizabeth entreated to be allowed to go up and see her father.

"There can be no objection," said the doctor, addressing the ladies, "except on your own accounts. I fear that you may be too much shocked. Mr. Arden lies in a state of perfect unconsciousness. You can do him no injury, but I fear for yourselves."

But the passionate entreaties of Elizabeth prevailed, and under promise of all possible self-restraint, the afflicted relatives were admitted to the room. Elizabeth rushed up to the bedside,

with a vehemence which alarmed the surgeon, gazed with clasped hands on the death-like face of her father, and then imprinting many kisses on his lips, dropped on her knees by the bedside, and burying her face in her hands, gave way to a paroxysm of natural woe. Who cannot conceive the thoughts and feelings which agitated her as she recalled the sorrowful passages of the last few weeks?

The arrival of the physician made it necessary that the afflicted relatives should withdraw from the room. A suspense of the intensest kind racked them, till they could learn the opinion of this gentleman. It was that he lived, and that he might live for some days—more he could not, or probably would not, say. Every remedy which science could suggest was tried, and the night was spent in active running to and fro, and in watching and in various medical applications. Still the deep stupor maintained its hold, and the doctors said that possibly this might continue, and the patient thus pass insensibly away.

But just as the pale light of the morning began to break, Mr. Arden opened his eyes, looked anxiously round, and said in a voice of much emotion:

"My Angela! where are you? Do you leave me? And those dear children, why are they gone?"

Mr. Dewey stepped to his side, and said:

"My dear Mr. Arden, it rejoices me to see you better."

"Better! How is this? I was with my dear Angela in heaven. Ay, now I recollect the frightful riot; but this is long ago. I was stunned, I thought I was dead; but how is this?"

"Shall I call Miss Arden and Miss Nelly?" asked Mr. Dewey.

"Oh yes, yes! call them instantly, instantly. I owe them much. I have promised to make all right."

In the next moment, Elizabeth, torn by mingled grief and joy, yet commanding herself with all her power for her father's sake, was in her father's arms, and Miss Nelly, Mr. Charles Arden and his mother were leaning over his bed.

"My darling," said Mr. Arden, as he put his arm tenderly round his daughter's neck, while her heart was bursting with emotions of grief and thankfulness too violent to be subdued, "my darling, there was a black cloud

between us—an ugly, dark cloud, but it is gone; we are dear to each other. Elizabeth," he continued, and Elizabeth looked up, and gazed into his face with an expression of such love and grief as those who saw it never can forget till their last hours, "my Elizabeth, I have been with your dear mother in heaven, and with those dear children who died before you were born. I shall go to them again, but they said I must speed away, and make all full of love as it was before. Ah Nelly," said the suffering man, casting a sudden look at her, "make haste, make haste! that last will—there it is in that bureau. Bring it out, it is a wicked, wicked will. It must be destroyed."

In an instant, Nelly turned to execute this righteous desire, but Charles Arden was before her, and taking the keys from his uncle's pocket, opened the bureau, produced the will, and showed to his uncle the date.

"September the ninth," said Mr. Arden, "that is it, burn it immediately."

Charles showed the date to Mr. Dewey, the doctors, and Miss Nelly, and then flung the ill-starred document into the fire, where it was soon a mere little cloud of ashes.

"That is right," said Gerard Arden, "now

I am at peace; and yet there is something—what is it?—which lies on my brain."

He raised his hand, and passed it over his forehead.

"Vincent," said the quick, heart-prompted voice of Elizabeth.

"Yes," said Mr. Arden, "that is it. Where is he? Let him come. Let him come quickly."

Elizabeth and Charles Arden started simultaneously up, and sprung from the room.

"Send an express," said Elizabeth. "Let him go with all the speed that there is in horses; let him do wonders, or it may be too late."

But Charles was already far down the stairs, and in a few seconds a man was galloping across the park at headlong speed.

Elizabeth was again kneeling by her father's side.

"Vincent," she said, "dearest father, is in London. It will be twenty-four hours at least before he can be here. But they are gone for him, and he will come at the very earliest possible moment."

"Let him come!—let him make haste," said Mr. Arden, his eyes again gradually growing

heavy, "for I cannot go till he comes." He lay once more as in a calm and profound sleep.

All that day sate by the sleeping sufferer, that weary, sorrow-laden group of relations and friends. The medical men quitted him not for many minutes, both together. All day, all night, sate there that mournful company. Many a time did Elizabeth quit her hold of her father's hand, and gaze from the window over the silent park, as if her straining eyes, and yearning heart, could hasten the progress of that messenger who was galloping on and on, and ever on with fresh and fiery horses, over hill and dale, through wood and plain.

All day, all night still sate those mourners by that slumber-bound old man; while a young man spurring from huge London, dashed on as for life and death, life and death of a dear friend, dearer than his own. There they sate, while the same pale and wearied horseman gallopped onward, onward, nearer, nearer,—and now worn down by his fiery ride, threw himself into chaise after chaise, and still came on and on.

Many a time had Elizabeth Arden risen restlessly, and looked down the dark and hushed park, returning to seat herself by that still sleep-bound

father, and to shed tears of deep woe and deepening fears. At length, she started, there was a distant sound. "He comes!" she exclaimed. She ran to the window, and her straining eyes seemed to drink up the shadow that still lay on the silent park.

"There is nothing," said the other watchers: but still Elizabeth Arden stood, her position unchanged, her eyes fixed intently on the gloomy road. Suddenly she clasped her hands, and dropped on her knees in an attitude of prayer.

A horse was heard passing at full speed up the road, past the house; and Elizabeth rushed from the room, and descended the stairs in haste. At their foot she was clasped in the arms of a traveller covered with dust, and haggard with his long, long journey. It was Vincent Dorrington.

Soon after, the two entered the sufferer's chamber: and knelt down by his bed. But Mr. Arden lay locked in profoundest stupor. The physician felt his pulse. "Will he wake?" asked one.

"He may," replied the physician, "but it must be soon."

As the dawn was palely breaking in the cham-

ber, once more, precisely at the same moment as on the yestermorn, Mr. Arden opened his eyes.

"Is Vincent come?" he faintly asked.

"Here he is, dearest father," said Elizabeth.

"Then all is well," said her father. He laid his hands with some difficulty upon their heads: "God bless you, my children!" The words were low but clear. His hands fell, there was a sigh, and once more the eyes of Gerard Arden were closed.

The physician laid his finger on the wrist.

"This time," he said, "he will wake no more!"

CHAPTER XV.

We will pass lightly over this melancholy time. Elizabeth Arden, sunk in grief and worn out by the agitations which she had of late gone through, and the violent shock from her father's fatal accident, was persuaded by Vincent and Miss Nelly to return to her aunt's house in Dalling for the present. By this she escaped all the distressing consciousness of the preparations for the funeral, and of that sad occasion itself.

When the funeral was over, there were present in Arden Lodge only Miss Nelly and Charles. Charles's mother was too much affected by the death of her brother-in-law to be present.

"My dear aunt," said Charles, producing Mr. Arden's will, "though we only are here,

I wish to make you acquainted with the contents of this will, as you may inform my cousin of them. When she is better, we will have a more formal reading of it."

Charles then began and read over the wordy introduction, which, in common with such documents, that also bore, and then proceeded:

"And I hereby devise and bequeath all my estate, real as well as personal, all my lands, tenements, hereditaments, moneys, goods and chattels, whatsoever and wheresoever found, unto my beloved nephew, Charles Gerard Arden."

"To you, Charles?" said Miss Nelly, in surprise.

"Yes, to me, aunt," replied Charles Arden, looking from the will towards her, and equally surprised at the interruption.

"To you! but why to you? That must be the wrong will! Good gracious! can we have burnt the wrong will?"

"Aunt!" exclaimed Charles, "what do you mean? You yourself saw the date of the will destroyed."

"But that will left everything to you, I was told, and this does the same."

Miss Nelly recollected the eagerness with which Charles had himself brought out the

will, the officious manner in which he had shown to every one the date; and a doubtful suspicion seized her mind.

Charles Arden smiled—he saw the mistake his aunt had made from her ignorance of the technical language of wills, and he was tempted to teaze her a little.

"Well, aunt, hear the will, at all events."

"Not if the property is left to you," said Nelly, very angry.

"It is entirely left to me," said Charles, demurely.

"It is!" exclaimed Nelly, indignantly, "it is! Oh, Charles Arden, how can you be such a traitor! How can you have done such a thing! You knew what your uncle's real intentions were. You saw how anxious he was at the last to do right,—how his life was continued, as the doctors said, by miracle—actual miracle—to enable him to do right; and you can have deceived him, and thus robbed your cousin of her sacred patrimony!"

"But, aunt," said Charles, now deeply repenting of the *ruse* into which he had been tempted, a weakness of his as much as overhaste was that of his aunt; "hear me, aunt: all is quite right, I assure you."

"Oh, yes, right enough for you, no doubt! Oh, Judas!—and so young!" and Miss Nelly cast a glance upon him that was full of the most withering anger and contempt.

She was hurrying away, but Charles sprang forward, seized her arm, and cried:

"Aunt, dear aunt, just listen for one moment—all is quite right!"

"But the property is left to you!" retorted Miss Nelly.

"Yes, but for specific purposes. It is left—"

"I will hear no more!" and Miss Nelly put her hands to her ears, and hurried away. Her carriage was at the door, and before Charles could overtake her—for he saw a number of servants about, and shrunk from making a scene—she had driven off.

Charles Arden was in a perfect trepidation. He knew his aunt's failing, and had often amused himself at it; but he could not have believed she could have made such a glaring mistake as this. He did not reflect how wrapped up she was in Elizabeth, and how likely the fact of the Arden estate having so lately been actually left to him, was calculated to make her suspicious. He now felt how ill-timed was so solemn an occasion to indulge

a thought of surprising her, and to avoid all appearance of anything wrong, he called quickly for his horse, and rode quietly towards Dalling till he was out of sight of the house. He then gave spurs to his horse, and gallopped on to overtake his aunt on the road.

But the dreadful state of her mind had caused her to drive at full speed. She had reached home before he overtook her. He leapt from his horse, and ran into the house, to explain all to her before she could give Elizabeth such an alarm as he believed she would do if not prevented. He was hurrying towards the sitting-room, when a man-servant stopped him, saying:

"Mr. Arden, I beg your pardon, but Miss Nelly can see no one just now."

"Me she must see," said Charles, determinedly, and was passing on, but the servant placed himself firmly before him.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Arden, but mistress's orders are positive; I cannot let you pass."

"Good God, man!" exclaimed Charles, growing desperate; "do you know what you are doing? I must and will see my aunt instantly; it is a matter of life and death."

"It cannot be, Sir, just now," said the man, who had been made quite conscious by Miss

Nelly's agitated manner, and peremptory order that something very extraordinary had transpired. "It cannot be, Sir—" Charles pushed past the man frantically into the room. Miss Nelly was not there.

"Where is she?—where is my aunt?" Charles demanded.

"In her room up stairs."

"Then tell her I must speak with her—and at once."

"I dare not do it, Sir," said the man, with great firmness; "her orders are most positive that she shall not be disturbed till she comes down again."

It was not till after a long struggle to persuade the man to convey a message, that his importunity prevailed. The servant went up, and returned with a very grave look.

"Miss Nelly desires me, Sir, to say—I beg your pardon, but I am obliged to say it—that she will have nothing to say to you."

"But she must!" replied Charles, stamping with rage and distraction. "I will write her a note."

He hurried into the room, wrote hastily a note, which, not without much persuasion and the solemn declaration that it regarded the most

vital interests of the family, could he prevail on the man to carry up. He carried it up, and immediately afterwards brought it down again.

"Sir," said the man, quite pale with fright, "Miss Nelly would not touch it, and has declared if I dare to interrupt her again, she will dismiss me from her service."

On hearing this, Charles, with an actual groan, quitted the house, and rode rapidly back towards Arden Lodge. No sooner had he gone out of sight, than Miss Nelly, who had come home full of the idea of declaring to Elizabeth that she was robbed of her patrimony by her perfidious cousin, but had thought better of it on the way, again entered her carriage, which still stood at the door, and drove off too. She had actually entered her chamber, and prayed to be guided what best to do in the case; and it now flashed upon her to go at once to Westwood, and disclose the shocking news to Vincent and Mr. Dorrington, who as a great lawyer would best know what to do.

Miss Nelly had scarcely reached the Dene, and electrified all there by this astonishing news, when rat-tat came a thundering knock at the door, and of all persons in walked Charles Arden, flurried, hot, and yet pale, with a packet

in his hand. He had ridden back to Arden Lodge for the will, having also resolved, most likely at the very instant that his aunt had done so, to go and show the will to Mr. Dorrington, and get him or Mrs. Dorrington without delay to undeceive his aunt.

There was a sensation of surprise and considerable awkwardness as Charles Arden walked rapidly into the room, and with a look of much vexation.

"How dare you, Charles Arden, show your face here?" exclaimed Miss Nelly, indignantly.

"Aunt!" said Charles, with a short, determined tone, "I dare show my face anywhere. I owe you, however, the most heartfelt apology for giving way at a very wrong moment to an idea of surprising you. But really you are so hasty!"

"Mr. Dorrington," said he, turning to that gentleman, "my aunt has run off with the absurd idea that my late uncle has committed the wicked wrong of leaving his property away from my cousin, and to me."

"Well, you said so, Charles," interrupted Miss Nelly.

"I say so still," he added, with a grave, firm look.

"You do!" exclaimed Miss Nelly.

"Yes, but only in trust, aunt; only in trust, for my dear cousin Elizabeth!"

Mr. Dorrington, who in a moment comprehended Miss Nelly's delusion, burst into an involuntary fit of laughter.

"Let me look at the will," he said.

Charles Arden put it into his hand.

Mr. Dorrington, with professional tact, looked at the beginning; then turned over the folios to another section; looked near the end, and said, with a smile at Charles and at Miss Nelly:

"As righteous a will as ever was made. The whole, with the exception of certain minor bequests, is bequeathed to the true heiress, Elizabeth Arden."

"Then why do people," said Miss Nelly, angry now at her ludicrous mistake, "make wills in such a silly way? Why don't they say at once and in the beginning what they mean?"

Mr. Dorrington smiled. "Miss Arden," he said, "another time I shall be most happy to explain what is the legal notion of will-making; but now let me hope that you have not said anything to your niece of this; if you have, not

a moment must be lost in setting her mind at ease."

"No, no! thank God, not a word!" said Miss Nelly.

"Ah! there, aunt, you relieve my heart from a millstone," said Charles Arden, with a great sigh; and offering her his hand he said: "We have both been wrong, aunt, and the thing has been most amazingly ridiculous; but if you will forgive me, I will forgive you; and," added he, with a slight shake of the head, "you have said savage things, aunt; you cast a most ugly suspicion on me."

"Oh! I can forgive you anything now, Charles," said Miss Nelly, who had recovered her balance of mind; "but it was too bad to frighten me so."

"Well, and you frightened me famously," said Charles. "I think we are quits at all events."

All present joined in laughter at the odd mistake, and in congratulation that all was set right. Vincent and Charles Arden seemed to become now really first acquainted, and cordially liked each other.

"I hope, Mr. Dorrington," said Charles, "as I am so young for the management of such

important matters, you will come up and give me your kind advice and assistance in executing the will, and putting everything in the order that Mr. Arden has indicated in it. I shall be glad to show you and Mr. Vincent all the papers, and everything you will find in such order, that I shall be quite prepared to yield up my twelvemonth's trust, having done everything required."

Miss Nelly, now relieved of the nightmare of her grand mistake, hastened home to console Elizabeth by her presence. As for Charles, he seemed to have found himself particularly at home at the Dene. He stayed to luncheon, walked through the gardens and grounds, admired the place wonderfully, and was wonderfully liked by every one for his frank, manly manner, evident good heart, and sound sense. Vincent and Charles got on amazingly together, and there was something in the round, bright face of Harriet Russell, that seemed to attract Charles wonderfully.

When he was gone, Mrs. Dorrington said to Harriet: "I like this Mr. Charles Arden extremely, don't you, Harriet?" Harriet extremely liked him. And Mrs. Dorrington said afterwards to Mr. Dorrington: "If I am not a

very false prophet, I foretel a wedding one day between two young people that are not far off."

"A wedding!" said Mr. Dorrington; "how you women do jump to such conclusions. *I* see nothing of the kind."

Mr. Dorrington accompanied Vincent soon after in a ride up to Arden Lodge. We may imagine with what pride a man with such veneration for property rode through the woods and park of Arden, surveyed the fine old house, and revelled amongst deeds and other documents, all which things were, ere long, to be Vincent's, and to descend to the Dorrington posterity. We may imagine what a wonderful change insensibly took place in his heart as to Vincent. He was no longer the poet and the dreamer. He had shown himself a man of the highest practical ability. He had amassed a fine fortune in a few months, and had cast a lustre on the Dorrington name wide as the English language went. Vincent was established in the paternal mind, as the son of whom to be proud beyond all limit.

But there now occurred a singular event which was to show Mr. Dorrington another son who had received hard measures at his hands, and whom he regarded as having disgraced and encumbered the family in no ordinary degree—but

who had, on the contrary, only swelled that tide of worldly fortune which now seemed so extraordinarily pouring upon the Dorrington family.

There came a large packet to the firm of Dorrington and Darwin, addressed to those gentlemen. On being opened, it was found to contain a miniature of a lady beautifully painted, and a letter stating, that from memorandums found amongst the papers of the late Nicholas Dakeyn of *Puerto de España*, and formerly of *Naparima*, it appeared that his only daughter, Christina, had married in their neighbourhood a gentleman of the leading name in their firm—Dorrington. It begged their aid in ascertaining whether Christina Dorrington had left any issue, as large estates in Trinidad had devolved upon such issue in equal shares, if such there were, and their identity could be fully established. The portrait enclosed was that of Christina Dakeyn's mother, and was said to bear a remarkable likeness to herself.

This was astounding news. And one morning as Miss Nelly Arden and Elizabeth, now much recovered in strength and in her wonted cheerfulness of mind, came to the Dene, they found the family deep in astonishment at this revelation.

"What a lovely dark woman!" said Elizabeth, looking at the miniature.

"And how astonishingly like poor Christina!" said Vincent. "Poor Delmey! poor Christina!" he added, "how hard was your lot. Would that you could have lived to this moment. It was what Christina said might come, but no one credited her."

Mrs. Dorrington shed tears over the remembrance of things now long past, but never to be forgotten; and Mr. Dorrington sate in deep thought. A wonderful operation was going on in his mind. He was running over the years of fearful severity which poor Delmey had experienced at his hands. He remembered with a sense of strange compunction how he had treated Christina as little better than a vagabond. And yet she was the daughter of a long line of proud Hidalgos, and the contingent heiress of a princely property.

Never had the proud venerator of title and estate been so deeply humbled, so haunted by a bitter remorse. He looked at the three lovely children—now wealthy beyond conception—and felt that he would have given years of his life, had but Delmey and Christina still been living at this moment. How crushing

was the reflection, that but for harsh treatment they might. He stroked the head of the dark-eyed, bright-looking Hernando, and vowed inwardly to watch over and do all that was in his power for the orphans. How easy was such a vow at such an hour!

"But," said Vincent, "some one must go and prove the claims of these dear children. There are plenty of proofs. There must be affidavits of people here who knew Dakeyn and Christina. A copy of the record of Christina's marriage, from the parish register, certified by the clergyman, and that bible in which she herself has entered the births of her children. There is plenty of evidence; but who shall go and see the claim established, and make all proper arrangements, for the due management of the estates, and security of its income?

"I regret," continued Vincent, "and have often bitterly regretted it, that I was away in poor Delmey's last troubles, and could neither aid nor console him. I feel that I owe him and his some sacrifice—some exertion. My dear Elizabeth, you would not object to my going to Trinidad on this business?"

A sudden paleness marked Elizabeth's alarm at this proposal; but in the next instant

she took Vincent's hand, as he sate on the sofa by her, and said:

"No, dear Vincent, no — go; go by all means. No one ever manages these things better than you. You are so accustomed to travel. You shall go. I love you better for the offer."

Mrs. Dorrington alone looked anxious, and said:

"Could the business not be managed by letter, or by some one else. The winter is coming for the voyage; and how, indeed, could Vincent fulfil his promise to Canning, and be back to take his seat in Parliament."

But Vincent had resolved; nothing would turn him. It was yet only October. In four or five months he believed he could go, arrange everything, and be back in time before any great discussion had been brought on upon the foreign policy of the country. His father approved of, and advocated his going. He undertook to get together the necessary proofs of identity; and Vincent wrote at once to Canning to explain what had taken place. He received a speedy answer, wholly approving of his project; and in another week he was on

board a vessel at Liverpool, bound for Trinidad.

Elizabeth Arden was again residing in the home of her ancestors; and we may imagine how much the affectionate society of aunt Nelly, of Mrs. Dorrington, and not unfrequently of the gay-hearted and accomplished Harriet Russell, tended to pass on pleasantly the time of Vincent's absence. Charles Arden was the active manager of the estate for the time. It did not escape even Elizabeth that a very marked intimacy was growing betwixt him and Harriet Russell. It was a circumstance which she observed with the highest pleasure, as likely to fix constantly near her so charming a friend..

CHAPTER XVI.

While Vincent Dorrington is once more become a voyager, and is steering his way over the Western Ocean to the pleasant island of Trinidad, we must put on record an event which took place in Westwood, and which contributed particularly to enliven it during that otherwise dull interval.

We know not whether it is the universal case in sublunary affairs, that young people have a determined bias towards making alliances which are anything but what their more experienced parents and guardians would propose for them; but, certain it is, that in this present authentic history we have found this phenome-

non surprisingly predominant. Mrs. Dorrington, though marrying with her father's consent, did so most violently in opposition to her mother's ideas; and very much to the prior hopes of her aunt, Madam Van Orren, and her friends, the Khestevens. Poor Delmey Dorrington's story is too well known; and Elizabeth Arden's we have had just now to narrate. And here again is all Westwood agitated by a similar event.

We promised some time ago to inform the reader what came of Miss Theodosia Vining's visits to Farmer Greatorex's to gather health in the same bucolic and domestic avocations as the farmer's own daughters. Nothing could possibly succeed better. Theodosia's cough disappeared as by magic. It could not stand for a week against new milk, moulding very neat pats of butter; and all the merry laughter which took place over tart-making, and sewing in the garden-arbour, while Theodosia read some of her favourite novels to the Misses Greatorex; and the farmer often brought his pipe, listened and laughed, and made his comments.

Theodosia's cheeks began to grow actually plump, and to hoist the national colours—we

mean those of the lily and the rose—especially when she had several times risen to join the young farmeresses in the frolic of washing their faces in May-dew. They rode together, moreover, all down the valley past Fulbourne, and through the woods all round by the dams of Lerk, and sometimes past Arden Lodge; and were so very merry, that the labourers in the fields stopped their work to look after them.

Well, this was all most admirable. The farmer asked Mrs. Parrymore what she thought now? And whether making butter, and runing in the hay-field, were not some little preferable to running in leaden-shoes and carrying sand-hampers? The farmer had so evidently the best of it, that Mrs. Parrymore could not deny it. Miss Theodosia Vining was now not only one of the very cleverest girls thereabout, but one of the merriest and most handsome.

But one day there came an explosion in Westwood as astounding as if a powder-mill had blown up. Mr. John Greatorex and Miss Theodosia had ridden out together one day, and, instead of coming back to dinner, had sent a note to say that they had just ridden over to the county-town—and—with a special licence—had—got married!

If a thunderbolt had fallen in the court-yard of Westwood Hall, it could not have produced half the shock which this announcement did in that ancient building. Mrs. Parrymore was for awhile struck speechless, and then was afflicted with as violent an outburst of language. Theodosia and John Greatorex! Mrs. Parrymore and Farmer Greatorex brought into so close a connection by marriage! We leave it to pens with far sharper nibs, and to ink of far more expressive tint, than ours, to express the emotions of rage, shame, and mortification, which tore through the distracted mind of Mrs. Parrymore. As for the Captain, he bore it with the stoicism of a philosopher.

But the farmer himself was not the less taken by surprise than any one. He hurried over to the Parrymores to express his astonishment. Mrs. Parrymore received him as she would have received a thief come to carry off her jewels. The blackest thunder-cloud that had for ten years floated over Westwood, was not half so black—the fiercest frost that had congealed its clods and waters was not half so fierce!

"I hope," said the farmer, "you don't suspect me, Madam, of any hand in such clandestine transactions?"

"Not you!" exclaimed Mrs. Parrymore, "not you! who then? To be sure, I do. That was what you were plotting, with your cheese-making, and whey-drinking, and all that trumpery. Oh, you viper! you Manticora! that is what you were after!"

"What!" said the farmer, indignantly, "you suspect me!"

"I do," said Mrs. Parrymore; "I do, to be sure, and nobody else."

"Well, then," continued the farmer, swelling with indignation, "let me tell you, Madam, that I scorn the computation. I shake the dust of my feet off against the charge, or I would, if it warn't muddy weather, and no dust on them. Why, Madam, I'm for none of your plottings and plannings. I'm fair and above board. If my John had mentioned it to me, I should have said: 'Well, lad, ax th' uncle and aunt, and tak thy chance—let's have no underground work.' But now it's done, it's done; and, blame me, if I can see so much amiss in it, now I come to think of it."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Parrymore.

"Of course not!" re-echoed the farmer, astonished and nettled at the lady's tartness. "Well, Madam, if that's your opinion of me,

I say good day, Madam, good day: you'll not see me darken your doors in a hurry."

"I dare say," said Mrs. Parrymore, "when I send for you you will be able to find the way through my doors."

"Pshaw," said the farmer, going off highly incensed, "a bullock with two yards of horns could do that." With that he marched off at a great rate, wiping his brows as he went, and so ended this lively interview.

The two young culprits had stayed in the county-town till they heard some tidings of how matters went. The news was not very encouraging; but as the farmer had had his feelings so unsparingly lacerated by Mrs. Parrymore, he determined to forgive the transgressors, and at once went down to the Dene to detail to Mrs. Dorrington, the injurious aspersions of Mrs. Parrymore upon his honour, and to solicit her to allow the young couple to occupy for the present, the cottage which Miss Harriet Russell and the orphan grand-children had occupied, who, since the great news from Trinidad, were gone down to the Dene.

This was at once acceded to; and though it certainly did seem to give encouragement to these startling elopements, Mrs. Parrymore found

much less sympathy in her hysterics against her niece and her young husband than she expected; and all the good people of Westwood, the Dorringtons included, visited the young couple, and saw no dreadful disparity in their marriage.

John Greatorex was a fine, hearty young man, very clever in his profession, and had received an excellent education from Jeremiah Gould. He had a taste for books, had an eye and a heart for nature; and as it was well known that Greatorex was rich, nobody pitied either Theodosia or her aunt. As for the Captain, it was not three days before he went out coursing, and contrived to steal round by the cottage, and give his niece a hearty kiss, and John Greatorex a hearty shake of the hand. He advised them to make themselves quite comfortable in their neat little home for awhile, and all would be right; "But at present," said he, "the weather is too hot our way. But anon! anon!"

The good Jeremiah, himself quite inwardly delighted at this event, for he knew that John Greatorex was really an excellent and able young man, could not avoid, in the course of a day or two, trying what his intercession could effect with Mrs. Parrymore, especially when he had seen that, in truth, the Captain was most tho-

roughly satisfied with it. He therefore called on Mrs. Parrymore, and after letting her introduce the subject, and expend a considerable portion of her steam on it, he endeavoured to throw in cautiously palliating observations. But the experiment was only too fresh on the fact, and Mrs. Parrymore only kindled up more hotly, and threw out a volume of biting accusations against the farmer. She accused him of being at the very bottom of it, and of being a designing, plotting, selfish fellow.

"No, no, Madam, you do Greatorex wrong," said the Vicar. "He is an Israelite without any guile. He is not a man for plotting and planning. If he had had an eye to Miss Theodosia for his son John, he would have said outright: 'Try thy luck, lad, and take thy chance;' and he would have spoken to you himself about it. No, Greatorex, if you knew him as I do, and as you must and will one day know him, you would see that he is, but for his rough exterior and rustic education, one of the truest gentlemen that ever lived. That man, Madam, has a head like a great lighthouse, it is as clear as a bell, and the fullest of sound sterling sense of any head I know; and then for a heart—ah! nobody has more cause to know what a noble

heart that is than I have. What should I have done in this parish, and in many troubles, but for Greatorex? He has been always to me like a great strong tower to flee to, and like an oracle to ask counsel of. Greatorex never failed living man in the hour of real need. Rough he is, and outspoken he is, but what a depth there lies in him.

"It has pleased God, dear friend, to give me great acceptance amongst my parishioners; they are fond of my preaching, which cannot but be a pleasant thing to a man whose life of usefulness lies in his power of commanding the serious attention of his hearers; but even there what should I have been but for Greatorex? The charm which draws not only my own people, but many others to my church from the country round, is derived from the sage and shrewd advice of Greatorex.

"When I first came to Westwood as a very young man, I had a young man's faults. I desired to stir my people's hearts by a fervid eloquence, and I preached with all the power and the beauty, as I thought, which nature and my education gave me. I was really in earnes but I was inwardly grieved to perceive so little actual fruit of my exertions. I could not help

opening my heart on the subject to the farmer one day, as we were smoking in my summer-house; we were young men together then.

" 'Well,' said the farmer, 'as you've mentioned it, Mr. Gould, I am glad of it. It is not for an ignorant clodhopper like me, to presume to advise a man of your learning and talent, Vicar; but a looker-on, you know, is always said to see something of the game. Now, there's nobody who hears you preach but must be charmed with it. But to touch these dull fellows here to the quick is another matter. They've no imaginations, my friend, these chaps here, not at all. They want sharp poking under the fifth rib with sayings familiar to 'em, and like burrs that will stick about their home-spun, linsey-woolsey minds, till they comprehenden them.

" 'Now, Vicar, there's a deal of improvidence in this village. There's that Tim Meakin, last winter killed a pig, and what did he and th' family do? They fried, and they boiled, and they roasted, till, blow me, if they had not eaten up the whole pig before they got it salted. There is that Ned Lockner again, he brewed a bushel of malt for beer against cutting his bit of a croft of hay. Well, byleddy, if he and

th' family did not sit sipping and sipping at the sweetwort till not a drop was left to put into the barrel.

" ' Now, Vicar, you might talk yourself hoarse to those thickheads about care and economy. You might quote St. Paul about a man that does not provide for his family being worse than an infidel. And what then? They'd owe you a grudge, Vicar; they'd harden their hearts against you, like Pharaoh. No! no! Keep off all that, Vicar; keep off all that. You must go judgmatically to work with all such cattle.

" ' Well, now, suppose I were going to preach to them—as I'm not likely—how would I deal with 'em? I'd take a text a long way off, and one that comes like velvet down on their lazy consciences. But then I'd wind round, Vicar, I'd wind round, and when they were in good-humour, I'd peg away, and hit hard, and drive into 'em. I'd hold my tongue about St. Paul and the infidels, at first; and to cure 'em of their improvidence, for instance, I'd take this text: " God is no respecter of persons. He causeth His sun to shine on the just and the unjust." '

" ' I am anxious to know,' said I, ' what you could possibly make out of that?'

"'Well,' continued the farmer, 'I'd take that text. They'd like to hear that, depend upon it. It's very flattering to the natural man.'

"'Then I go on:

"'My brethren: That is a very comfortable doctrine. It is what I call good news from the other world. There may be likings and dislikings, frownings and slights on this earth, but there's not, it's clear, with the Great Judge. Kings and Queens, lords and gentlemen, my friends, are but men, and as men, He'll treat 'em all alike. Nothing can be more comfortable, and from this we may observe three things: first, God is no respecter of persons; secondly, there is a Providence; and, therefore, thirdly, Providence must treat all alike.

"'Now, my friends, we'll not dwell on my first and second; they are scriptural, and you'll not dispute Scripture. But the nut hardest to crack lies in my third: that God treats all alike, so here we will dwell a little. If He treats all alike, you'll say, what about Kings and beggars; rich and poor? True, but He sends his sun to shine on the just and the unjust—that there's no disputing; and that

looks vastly like treating all alike. It means just this, we mun make hay while the sun shines; and if we don't, why, there's no hay made; and there'll be a bare crib in winter.

"'God sends opportunities—great opportunities—that is His business, and ours is to use 'em. Providence above, and Providence below—that's all fair and reasonable. And what means Providence? It means provide-ence. There's a provide-ence on earth: and depend on it, if you don't work and provide while God's sun is shining on the just and the unjust, there'll be a bare crib in winter.

"'So, here's my application. Beware of a bare crib in winter. Ha! my friends, that's a miserable thing is that bare crib in winter. Childrens starving—crying—wife pining—no comfort—and all for not taking notice that God is no respecter of persons. If you won't make use of His opportunities, He won't help you, be ye who you will, out of course. Remember, God sends His sun to shine on the unjust as well as on the just, and if the unjust be expecting mellow pears to drop into their mouths, while the just are up in the tree gathering, why there'll be kings and beggars, rich and poor, and nobody have a right to com-

plain. Provide as God provides, and then all will be right; neglect it, and there will be a bare crib. The unjust will flourish that make hay while the sun shines; and the just that does not—nay, there is no just that does not—for the man who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. So let us all be awake and doing while the sun shines. Be little providences under the Great Providence, and, above all things,—beware of a bare crib in winter.'

"'There,' said the farmer, 'that's the way I should talk to them. Stroke them down smoothly, and pat 'em on the neck like a young colt at first, and then stick that bare crib well into them, they can understand that, and clench it with the infidel, and depend upon it, it will tell.'

"Do you know, my friends," continued the Vicar, for the Captain was now come in, and gave Jeremiah approving nods behind his wife's back, "do you know that I preached that very sermon, as near as I could put it down, the very next Sunday; and never did I see such attention. All were eagerly listening to me; and I never had such low courtesies from the women, or such respectful bows from the men,

as I issued from the church after it. All the week after, Mr. Toby told me the people were talking of it, and saying there never had been such a sermon preached; that the Vicar had struck into a new vein; and that bare crib was quoted for years after. It did more to drive improvidence out of the parish than all the moral maxims that Seneca or Epictetus could have furnished me with. From that day, I studied to fill my sermons with the imagery and language that were best understood by my simple parishioners; and the result has been, as I think you will allow, most satisfactory. That I owe too, as I do so much besides, to the farmer."

Jeremiah Gould thought he must have completely cleared the farmer in the opinion of the Parrymores by this statement, but to his surprise Mrs. Parrymore said:

"Mr. Gould, you have perfectly confirmed me in my idea of Greatorex. What a cunning, scheming man! Don't you see how he could enable you to catch the people's minds, to entangle their attention; to bias their judgments."

The Vicar was astonished.

"Dear Madam!" he exclaimed, after a look

of vast amazement, "and was not that good; was it not for a fine purpose? Must we not be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?"

"Ay," retorted Mrs. Parrymore, "serpent enough—there is plenty of that in Greatorex. Did you observe, my dear," she said, turning to the Captain, "all that about patting the young colt, and taking your text a long way off. Oh! that is a most deep, designing, treacherous man!"

"Yes, a fine fellow!" said the Captain, who had been fairly laughing quietly behind her back, as he lay lounging in his easy-chair, at the neat way she had caught up the Vicar, after what he thought his clenching sermon.

"What is that you say, Captain?" asked she sharply.

"A fine fellow!" I said.

"Who are you talking of?"

"Of Greatorex, to be sure."

"Of Greatorex! You!"

"Yes, my dear Mrs Parrymore, I quite agree with the Vicar. I don't think Greatorex has any mischief in him, but a confounded deal of good."

Mrs Parrymore actually gave a shriek of horror at this cool declaration.

"What! like that Greatorex!—that horrid vulgar man! What shall we do with him at our parties—and so connected as he now is with the family."

"You may do just as you like at your parties," continued the Captain, "Greatorex won't care a fig whether he is at any of them or not; and as to that, it is not him, but his son, that Theodosia has married; and John Greatorex, I will assert that anywhere, is as well-behaved, well-informed, and gentlemanly a man, as you need see or talk with. For my part, I think he'll do us great credit; and I am sure the farm would do us a precious deal more than it does, under his management. I've just seen Theodosia; she seems very happy, and blooming as a rose. She only wants to throw her arms about your neck, my dear, that's all."

Jeremiah Gould rose, and gave the Captain a cordial shake of the hand.

"God bless you," he said, "you have done me a deal of good. All will be right."

But Mrs. Parrymore protested it would not. And yet, in less than a month, John and Theodosia had taken up their quarters at the Hall. They were soon all blended into one family. John Greatorex rode over the farm, and soon

was in active operations for its improvement. Mrs. Parrymore soon came to like him greatly; and though she still persisted, when John Greatorex or Theodosia were not by, that the farmer was a deep, designing man, she said everywhere that John Greatorex was a really fine fellow, and quite a gentleman.

CHAPTER XVII.

TIME was progressing. It was now deepening into winter. At Westwood, and at Arden Lodge, the only subject of anxiety was the absence and the voyage of Vincent Dorrington. But letters had been received from him, written far out at sea, and sent by a spoken ship. His voyage was prosperous, and, as regarded his ship-companions, very agreeable. So on this score much of the fear attending the enterprise was dismissed, and much happiness had settled down on all our friends in these places. Elizabeth Arden was now cheerful, blooming, and full of sweet anticipations of the future. The storm was blown away from her sky. She had

won her freedom from an uncongenial yoke, and from the splendid thraldom of a high aristocratic position. Even in the sorrow which arose from the death of her father, there was mingled much that was to her most consoling. She had nothing in it to regret or deplore. By her own firmness she had saved him from a gross injustice, from the infliction of a lasting misery on his only child. Providence seemed to have given its most marked approbation to the deed. Though suddenly called from life, it was only in a good old age; and his existence had seemed expressly suspended till he had rectified the evil perpetrated in his anger.

Elizabeth thought constantly with a feeling of indescribable pleasure on his words, that he had been with her sainted mother, and was going again to her; that she had imbued him with the spirit of heaven, and enabled him to repair the wrong which must have marred his eternal peace, and left a gloomy memory of him in the heart of their child.

To her these were as firm matters of faith as any of the daily objects about her were matters of worldly fact. In Mrs. Dorrington she found the warmest and tenderest sympathizer with such views, and every day showed them how much they

had in common. The love of nature, of poetry, the same deep religious feeling, the strong desire to make life a field of usefulness and love; these were the feelings in which she had been educated by her aunt, Nelly Arden, and to her they were sacred, as being the holy heritage which she had derived from her long lost mother. In her childish years, when the loss of her mother was still fresh, and was a sore aching sense in her bosom, she remembered how she used to sit up in her bed, ere her aunt quitted her for the night, and with her arms round her, listen to the last words of that mother, the last earnest injunctions—that she should be taught to pass through life, not as a gaudy, useless insect, a creature of mere luxurious self-indulgence, seeking only how to gather pleasures and distinctions for herself, but as an immortal being, having a thousand claims upon her from her fellow-creatures, and whose highest happiness and privilege it was to work with God for man.

This conception of life had been carefully, nay, most sacredly, strengthened in her by her aunt, and had grown to a principle powerful as life itself. As she had grown up, plans and dreams of usefulness had expanded in her mind as the beautiful realizations of her mother's

wishes for her, and therefore it was that she felt such a peace and profound satisfaction in having been enabled to triumph over the great temptation which had beset her entrance into womanhood, and which would have chained her for ever to the merciless chariot-wheels of the world. It was for this reason that she reflected with so unmingled a delight on her future life with Vincent, through whom even yet more extended plans of good were brought within her track.

With what satisfaction did she consult with her aunt and Mrs. Dorrington on the great school she was going to build in Dalling—a working school, in which all the children of the estate would be not only taught the mere elements of reading and writing, but the practical knowledge of planting, gardening, handicraft arts; the girls, washing, getting up linen, sewing, knitting, cooking, and everything which could make them good servants and good housewives.

In Mr. Dewey she had an admirable helper in Dalling, and she had consulted with him, with Mr. Dorrington, and her cousin Charles, as to a complete plan of reform amongst the cottages of the work-people. All these were to

be rebuilt, or repaired as need were. To be drained thoroughly, a matter in which they were extremely deficient, and to every house a good garden attached, either adjoining it or as near as possible. To every labourer, a piece of land as an allotment. It was her object to extinguish pauperism by a proper instillation of an active principle of self-dependence in the young, and by a proper extension of opportunity for labour to the adult.

These plans she conceived, and her friends strengthened her in the belief, that in the end they would be rather profitable to her than any cause of additional expenditure, and would leave her income free for those demands from causes of social and public good beyond the mere boundaries of her estate—claims wide as the kingdom, and of humanity itself.

These were the things which occupied, what Elizabeth Arden laughingly called her business hours. In all else, never was a young, lovely woman of fortune more disposed to enjoy life under its ordinary aspects. Respect for her father's memory did not allow her to indulge in any great gaieties, but nobody was more cheerful and unaffectedly happy than Elizabeth Arden. She kept up the most friendly intercourse with her old acquaintance in the country round, and betwixt Arden Lodge and Westwood there was

drawn a close and most delightful bond of interest and intimacy. Mr. Dorrington, with his two grandsons, the dark-eyed Hernando and Lopez, might be often seen riding towards Arden Lodge, the two boys mounted on a pair of cream-coloured ponies of great beauty. Mrs. Dorrington and her little lively Inez were often there, and might be met driving with Elizabeth and her aunt through the woods, and by the pleasant waters about Arden.

At Christmas there was no *fête*, but a sociable gathering at Arden Lodge. Mr. Bathurst and the merry Clara Woodman were there. Jeremiah Gould had through Vincent been made acquainted with Elizabeth, and better acquainted than he had been with Mr. Dewey. The circles of Dalling and Westwood were blended into one.

Behold them on Christmas Eve assembled at Arden Lodge, Mr. and Mrs. Dorrington, Charles Arden, and Harriet Russell, Mr. Bathurst and Clara Woodman,, we cannot avoid putting them together, Mrs. George Arden, Mr. and Mrs. Dewey, Jeremiah Gould, Mr. and Mrs. John Greatorex, and to the astounding surprise of Mrs. Parrymore, who, with the Captain, were invited, the apparition of Farmer Greatorex himself!

Elizabeth Arden had heard so much of his great-heartedness from Vincent and Mr. Gould,

that she resolved to have him there. The farmer had shaken his head, and sent a very polite excuse, but it would not do. Miss Arden was determined that he should be there—and there he was.

Well, what came of it? Nothing, but that the farmer conducted himself with a propriety which convinced Mrs. Parrymore that he was a more consummate actor than ever. There he was placed by Elizabeth herself in a great cushioned chair, and there was she talking with evident interest of the deepest kind with him. It was all about her proposed plans for her labourers' cottages, and matters connected with her farms, on which Greatorex was an oracle. Scarcely did she quit his side, when Harriet Russell took her place, and the jolly man beamed on her such a broad, kindly smile, and held her hand as they talked with such a kind, fatherly way, that little Clara Woodman, drawing an ottoman to the other side of the farmer's chair, sate looking up at him so full of merriment and glee, that it was quite a picture. And what could Clara Woodman and the farmer find to talk of? Clara had soon drawn him out to talk of his own early life, and he was giving her some account of his courting days, which made both Harriet and Clara almost die with laughter. But the farmer coming to a sudden conclusion,

as he heard Mr. Bathurst strike a few notes on the piano, said: "By the bye, what a fine, hearty fellow that Mr. Bathurst is, so full of fun, and yet of sense, no pride, none whatever. Blame me, I wonder what all you young women can be about. If I were a handsome young thing like yourself, Miss Woodman, he's the very first man I would set my cap at."

Clara blushed, laughed, and skipped away to Jeremiah Gould, who was now producing his violin, at the request of Miss Arden. Presently Mr. Bathurst and Miss Woodman were singing to his accompaniment, and song and music became the great pleasure of the evening. The farmer declared on going away that he had never been so near heaven since the moment that he put his Nancy's ring on at the old church in Leicestershire.

So went on the time at Arden and at Westwood. In March there began to grow a great anxiety for the return of Vincent before the equinoctial gales set in. And he came. He had found all satisfactory. He had seen all the property of his nephews and niece, which consisted of cotton and cocoa plantations, and had most thoroughly proved their identity; had arranged with trustworthy agents, and with the chief banker in the Port of Spain, their guardian, to have an oversight of the whole, and to invest

duly the annual proceeds till the children were of age.

Vincent brought with him a quantity of jewels and dresses, and some family portraits, all which excited great interest and curiosity, as the family ornaments, likenesses of the old race of de Lares, the ancestors of Christina's mother.

Vincent had no difficulty now before setting off to London to induce his father to alter his will, leaving to Bulkeley merely his just one-third of his property, and to Hernando the Dene. He accomplished also another thing dear to the heart of his mother. Her brother Anthony was still living, but old and infirm beyond his years. His estate was sunk in debt, and poverty stared him in the face. Yet from prejudices strongly imbibed from his mother, he had always positively refused to sell his estate to his sister, Mrs. Dorrington, who had promised to make him easy for life, and to allow him to remain there. But now, such is the wonderful power of greatness and worldly success, Vincent found no difficulty in completing this arrangement. Anthony and his wife were to receive an annuity; the money of Mrs. Dorrington paid off the encumbrances of Fulbourne, and it was settled on the second of Delmey's children, Lopez Delmey. It was a

circumstance which seemed vastly to facilitate this conclusion that the boy bore the name of Delmey. Mrs. Dorrington had already purchased the adjoining farm of Broxtowe. Nathan Belfield was dead, and she had let it to James Greatorex, who was a close, still man of business, who cared for no stories of spectres, nor any associations with a place but that of good land and a fair rent. No ghosts haunted him, and he believed in none.

Thus one of the grand hopes of Mrs. Dorrington was fulfilled—Fulbourne was retained in the family; and she had the prospect of seeing all her children and grandchildren settled around her. Deep as had been her baptism into the trials and troubles of life, circumstances had conspired of late years to crown her family with an amount of prosperity which was almost unexampled. Much might be owing, no doubt, to the noble principles which she had implanted in the breasts of all of them, Bulkeley excepted —a dark bitter drop still and to the last in her cup—and to the splendid education which Jeremiah Gould had laid the foundation of, especially in Vincent.

But now Vincent must hurry up to town. Elizabeth and her aunt were going—we need not say why—to spend the season there, and in April to attend the marriage of Mr. Bathurst,

and, of course, the merry-hearted Clara Woodman. The great day of Vincent's parliamentary *début* came. He acquitted himself with an ability which more than realized all the hopes entertained of him. Elizabeth had the proud satisfaction to see him received in the best society in town in a manner which no mere worldly position can confer. In Parliament the cause of a more liberal policy prevailed. Canning became Prime Minister, and the public voice sanctioned in the most unequivocal manner his plans for the freedom of Greece and for Catholic emancipation.

But for the great Minister himself, those shadows of death to which he had alluded were rapidly closing round him. The great exertions of this session, and the bitter opposition and attacks from the highest and most influential quarters, seemed to have sapped the last powers of vitality in him. Parliament was prorogued on the second of July, and on the twentieth of that month, he retired, as it were with a prophetic sentiment, to the Duke of Devonshire's house at Chiswick, offered him for repose and change of air; and there, in the same room in which Charles James Fox had breathed his last, he also closed his career!

Before the news of this melancholy event had reached the country, there had been a great

day at Westwood. On a splendid July morning, the whole village appeared astir. The bells were ringing joyously, and about ten o'clock a train of carriages with white favours on the breasts of the coachmen, and on the heads of the horses, was seen approaching from Arden Lodge; and as they came in sight, others also were setting forward from the Dene. In the old church of Westwood, the old mother church of the district, that morning Jeremiah Gould, assisted by Mr. Dewey, united the hands of Vincent Dorrington and Elizabeth Arden; of Charles Arden and Harriet Russell.

Only while the ceremony itself was proceeding, ceased the bells; and that completed, again they burst forth with triumphant joy. The wedding-party took their *déjeúner* at the Dene, and an hour after, the two travelling carriages were descending the lane amid the hurrahs of the villagers, and the glad tears of Mrs. Dorrington, and many others at the Dene.

Conspicuous amongst the throng at the door of the Dene were Sally Horobin and Dan Hardy. Sally Horobin was blinking over the corner of her apron which was held to her face; and whether she was most crying or laughing it would be difficult to say.

"God bless 'em!" ejaculated Sally, "but I hope they'll not go off again to Mesopotamia."

"Pshaw!" said Dan Hardy, who somehow now thought with great pride on his exploits at Wood-Lincoln. "What's Mesopotamia to Trinidad in the Indies?"

Dan had a great notion that when Mr. Delmey's boys were grown up, and went to take possession of their estates in Trinidad, of going with them as a sort of champion against all sorts of unimagined dangers; little dreaming of how much he would have grown down by the time they had grown up.

Vincent and his lovely Elizabeth were bound for London, and thence for Kent, where they had property. Charles Arden and Harriet for Lemwell, Harriet's native home in Huntingdonshire. In ten days they were to meet at Dover, and together with Mr. and Mrs. Bathurst, to make a two months' tour of the continent.

And here we close our history of Mrs. Dorrington of the Dene. We have reached the crowning period of her life. We might point onwards to a time when the bells of Westwood were once more ringing, but with a different cadence—then slow and mournful; and all the country round, gentle and simple, had crowded into Westwood to witness the last honours of one of the most true-souled women who ever trod this English ground, a genuine mother in Israel. But that came many years hence: and now,

amid the sound of those bells in their most joyous mood, and amid the gladness of a sun-bright hour, we lay down our pen.

We lay it down, but not before we inform the reader that that day Jeremiah Gould and Farmer Greatorex gave a *fête* to all the village of Westwood, at their own expense, as Nelly Arden did to the village of Dalling.

Our two friends at Westwood gave theirs on the lawn of Westwood Hall—such was the wish of John and Theodosia Greatorex—and such, we are glad to record it, the express pleasure of Mrs. Parrymore, who, since she had seen the farmer at Arden Lodge, declared that he was capable of conducting himself like a duke.

There was a large, open canopy erected, and a capital dinner was served up by the joint exertions of the landlord of the "King of Prussia," and the cooks of the Dene, of Westwood Hall, of Mr. Greatorex and the Vicar. There was plenty of music, and all sorts of games and races. But the grand treat the farmer had reserved for the last—it was the exhibition of a velocipede. A few days before, in one of his rides, he was astonished by the sight of a man, who, according to the farmer's own account, seemed to be galloping along the road upon nothing. The farmer stopped, and

when it came up, asked the rider what he called that for a horse.

The rider was a young Londoner, who had ridden for a lark upon this newly introduced machine all the way to Falkirk in Scotland, and thus far back. Seeing the farmer's astonishment, the youngster, who was a regular wag, said it was a centipede.

"Drat it!" said Greatorex, "but it's the very thing I want just now. I want a regular novelty, and that's one. Young man, I'll pay you well to ride your centipede round at a grand do, we are going to have here."

"I don't exhibit for money," said the young man.

"Well, for luv then," said the farmer. "You're welcome to stay at my house; but you must keep your centipede out of sight till the moment, when it shall burst out on them like a flash of lightning."

"With all my heart," replied the youngster, and accordingly, the velocipede was carefully locked up by him, and the young man entertained till the *fête*. Just when all was merriment among the people:

"Now, my man!" cried the farmer, "out with the centipede," and out darted the youth, and careered at a rapid rate round the lawn, amid the shouts and cries of astonishment of

the people. To and fro, here and there, flew the strange man on his strange steed, chasing the villagers out of his path with cries and laughter. Now he darted away to a distance down the drive, and then coming back, circumgyrated the open ornamental water on the lawn.

The farmer was delighted at the success of his scheme.

"There's a new-fangled horse for you!—There's a centipede for you!" he exclaimed to the people.

"Centipede!" said Jeremiah Gould. "Velocipede, my dear farmer."

"Centipede or flossipede," continued Greatorex, "that's a double invention, at any rate, by which a man can ride and walk at the same time."

"Try it," said the waggish velocipedist; "try it, farmer; it is worth trying for once in your life."

"Ay, try it! try it!" cried the people.

"Nay, nay," said the farmer, "that is no nag for me."

But the people still cried, vociferously:

"Try it, Mr. Greatorex, try it!"

And as the honest farmer was in a high state of glee, he threw his stout leg over it, and made a few paces. At the sight of the huge

person of the jolly farmer on his odd machine, there was one universal hurrah; and the farmer, willing to please them, put out his energies, and drove along at a considerable rate. Loud were the laughter, the merriment, and clapping of hands; loud the cries of "Bravo! Well done, Greatorex!" when unfortunately the farmer came near the water, and thinking to turn his mechanical steed away from it, turned it directly down towards it. Down the smooth slope it went at a rapid rate, the people shouting, "Stop him! stop him!" the women screaming, and the farmer himself pulling hard at his wooden horse, and crying, "Wo! wo!"

At that sight, a number of young men, who were sitting by the farmer's motherly-looking wife and three buxom daughters—whispered to be lovers who were going soon to carry the latter all away—jumped up, and sprang after the farmer with all their speed; but John Greatorex was the first to catch his father by the coat behind, just as he was about to plunge headlong into the pond. A dozen hands, the next moment, had hold on him, and drew him back.

Nobody laughed more heartily than the farmer himself, and yet the very welkin rung with laughter when he was safe.

"Drat it, young man," said the farmer, as the velocipedist came to take his machine from

the water's edge, "thy horse is badly broke; it has got no mouth at all!"

"And if you could not break him, Sir," said the young man, smiling, and looking at the farmer's large person significantly, "I don't think any man in England could do it."

"Bravo!" shouted Greatorex, and then invited Jeremiah Gould to take a short airing on this comical horse. The Vicar politely declined, after the experiment of his friend, saying—and in his great elation that day, he for the first time in his life perpetrated a pun—that he did not feel himself qualified to bestride either a Peg*as*us or a Peg-*horse*-us; at which the villagers, hearing something, as they thought, about peg-horses, believed it a great joke, and made the air resound with their hurrahs!

And so closed the day on Westwood and all its happy hearts.

THE END.

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